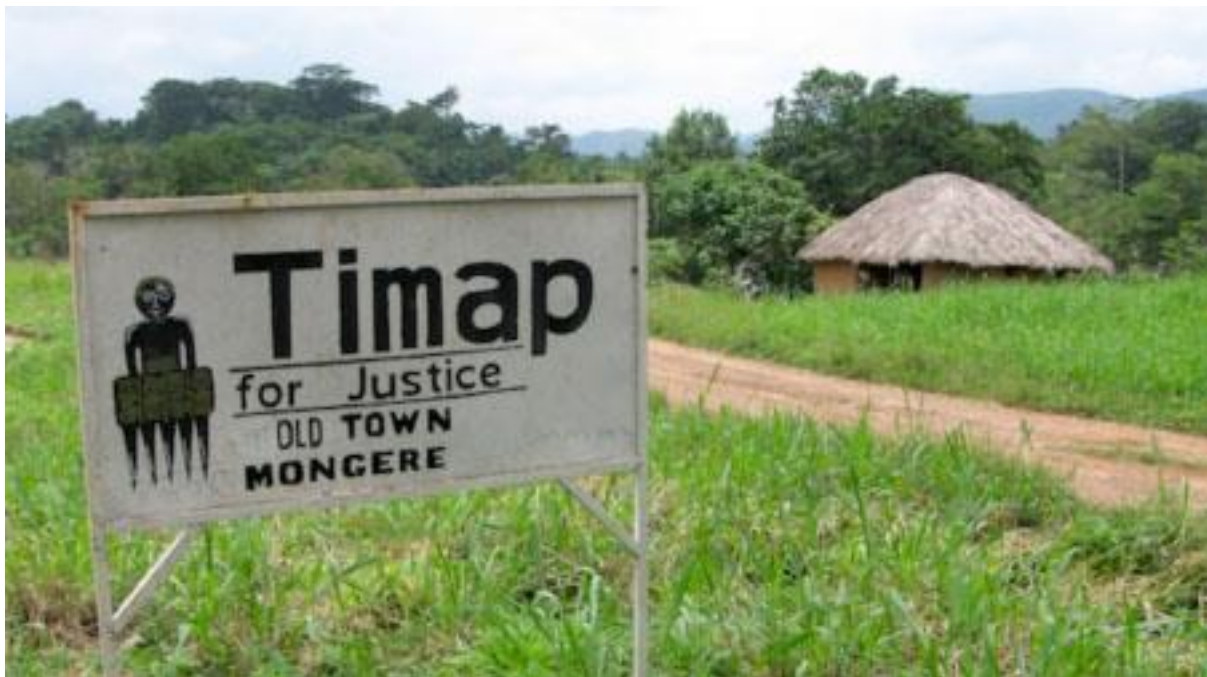


Excerpt from:

PARALEGAL MANUAL 2012



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



Advocacy Letters

Paralegals often employ advocacy to encourage action from a large institution. A common first step is to initiate a dialogue with the institution via a letter.

An advocacy letter must do several things in a small amount of space. It should briefly introduce the organization; concisely describe the clients, their problem with the institution, and key facts; precisely request an action or next step; and make clear how the paralegal will proceed in the matter. The paralegal must convey all of this information while maintaining a firm but professional tone. Although wild and emotional accusations should be avoided, the letter should make very clear the paralegal's legal concerns and expectations regarding the matter.

Below are a pair of mock advocacy letters. These have been used at paralegal training sessions and are designed to highlight the elements of an effective advocacy letter. Note the differences between the two letters and why the second one is the more effective.

After Reading

How is the second letter an improvement on the first? For one thing, it begins with a subject heading, so that the reader immediately knows the problem being addressed. For another, the language in the second letter is more concise and focuses only on the relevant facts, rather than delving into small details that distract the reader's attention away from the real problem. Note how the first letter weakens the firmness of its position by asking questions, posing hypothetical situations, or implying that the university may be in the right. Lastly, the second letter makes specific, actionable demands and is not vague about the organization's intentions like the first.

Mock Advocacy Letter #1 (Poor)

Monday, November 20, 2006

The Vice Chancellor
Mount Aerol University, Freetown

Dear Sir,

As you may be aware, Timap for Justice is a human rights organization under the constitution of Sierra Leone.

We were approached by some men seeking help with an issue with your institution after having been either forced to retire or pronounced redeployees. All our clients were originally employed by the Riverside Teachers College. The men received letters from Mount Aerol University under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology regarding their redeployment or retirement. The men have not been paid since March / April 2006. They are all members of a trade union.

We have been in conversation with some officials of both the University and the Ministry since the men approached our office; we have sent letters and come to see your personnel on numerous occasions seeking help for these men. It's not easy for most of them to survive without Mount Aerol University and the Ministry of Education collaborating in the interest of these men.

In terms of the redeployees, do you think it fair just and reasonable that the men were, and yet have to be given any information regarding their new location? It would seem that there was indeed no organisation in this matter right from the start. This is evident from the dates on the letters that were sent out informing our clients of their new employment status. The redeployment was to take effect from March 31st 2006, some of the letters were received on April 25th 2006, other letters were dated Jan 25th 2006 but most letters were received by the clients on and around the 2nd of May 2006. Perhaps you anticipated this right from the start and had decided amongst yourselves that denial of all knowledge would eventually make the problem, these men just go away! We would like to believe that this is in fact not the case and you in fact meant to make this process beneficial in some way to all concerned. Of course when institutions merge it is only natural that some employees should expect to lose their jobs, but this is a delicate situation and so must be handled so.

For the sake of your reputations, please help Timap for Justice help you in working collaboratively in solving this issue through consultation and prompt action.

We look forward to hearing from you, initially with a contact person in both your organisations with the relevant authority to serve as a decision maker. We can then get together and conduct the consultation.

In an event that this didn't work out, Timap for Justice will be left with no other option but to take legal action.

Thank you,
Timap Paralegal

Mock Advocacy Letter #2 (Better)

Monday, November 20, 2006
The Vice Chancellor Mount Aerol University Freetown

Dear Sir,

RE: REDEPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT OF WORKERS OF MOUNT AEROL UNIVERSITY,
FORMALLY RIVERSIDE TEACHERS' COLLEGE

Timap for Justice is a justice services organization that is dedicated to assisting Sierra Leoneans in addressing individual and community-level justice related problems.

On the 2nd August, 2006, this office was approached by nineteen employees who were inherited by Mount Aerol University from Riverside Teachers' College. According to our clients (the workers), they were served letters by the University administration stating that their services can no longer be retained and that they should go to the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology for redeployment. When these workers went to the Director as instructed, they were told by the Deputy Director that his Ministry is not responsible for any redeployment and that he lacked any knowledge of the issue. He advised the workers to go back to the University. These workers have not been paid since April 2006. They have been wrongfully denied both work and wage.

The workers have not been terminated or pronounced redundant. As such, they should still be considered workers. Their salaries for the past months should be paid and the destination of their deployment should be made clear.

For the sake of the reputation of the University and the Ministry, Timap for Justice encourages both institutions to work towards a peaceful resolution of these issues as fast as possible so that these teachers can start working and living their lives again.

TIMAP FOR JUSTICE will continue to monitor these issues up to the 30th November, 2006. If no positive action is taken by that time, we will have no other alternative but to consider other avenues of redress, such as legal action and/or approaching the press.

We count on your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,
Timap Paralegal

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