



WHO  
IS  
NAMATI?

# PUTTING LAW IN PEOPLE'S HANDS



A paralegal working for Namati's partner, the Access to Justice Law Center, in Makeni, Sierra Leone.  
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A community member calls people to attend a community rights meeting organised by paralegals at the village school in Rogbangba, Sierra Leone.  
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## WHAT IS NAMATI? WHAT DO WE AIM TO DO?

The UN estimates that 4 billion people around the world live outside the protection of the law. For these people the law is an abstraction, or a threat, but not something they can use to exercise their basic rights. Lawyers meanwhile are costly and often focused on formal court channels that are impractical for most people.

Namati champions a method - grassroots legal advocates, or "community paralegals" - for bridging the gap between the law and real life. These paralegals are trained in basic law and in skills like mediation, organizing, and advocacy. They form a dynamic, creative frontline that can engage formal and traditional institutions alike.

Instead of treating their clients as victims requiring an expert service - "I will solve this problem for you" - community paralegals can focus on legal *empowerment*. "We will solve this together, so you will be in a stronger position to tackle such problems in the future." Just as primary health workers are linked with doctors and hospitals, community paralegals should be connected to lawyers and the possibility of litigation or high-level advocacy if frontline methods fail.

Paralegal Win Naing Soe checks in with his clients, wife and husband, Daw San San Tin and U. Aung That Zaw, Theyat Pin Village, Burma. An official has registered some of their land in his own name. Win Naing Soe is working to get it back.

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## HOW WE WORK

Namati pursues three inter-linked strategies to grow a robust, evidence-based, global field around community paralegals, legal empowerment, and primary justice services.

1. Namati and its partners in eight countries demonstrate how paralegals can generate results on some of the greatest justice issues of our times: protecting natural resource rights in the context of the global land rush, ensuring that essential services like healthcare and education are accountable to local communities, and securing citizenship rights for stateless people.
2. Namati collects data rigorously on every case, and uses that information to advocate for systemic, large-scale reforms. We aim to show that not only can community paralegals help bring good laws to life, their work can also lead to positive changes in the law itself, and in the institutions by which law is applied.
3. We host a network of 340 legal empowerment organizations, spanning every region. We create opportunities for this larger community to learn from one another, and to learn from innovations we generate with our partners. We collaborate with network members to raise the profile of the field as a whole.



Paralegal Nahid Parvin (centre), of Namati's partner Council of Minorities, accompanies Farzana Naz, a member of the Urdu-speaking minority, to a Government registration office in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

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A paralegal office in a camp for Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis.  
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## OUR STORY

Namati's CEO Vivek Maru co-founded a community paralegal program in Sierra Leone in 2003, Timap for Justice, that has been recognized by International Crisis Group, Transparency International, President Jimmy Carter, the World Bank, and others as an innovative model for delivering justice services. In 2011 we founded Namati to build a movement of grassroots legal advocates worldwide.

Neither Timap nor Namati invented community paralegals—paralegals housed in ANC offices helped people navigate apartheid in South Africa starting in the 1950s, and there are paralegal efforts in many countries. But most existing programs work in isolation and at a small scale. They rarely document their own impact, and they rarely have access to lessons learned by their peers across borders.

Namati is the first and only international group dedicated to this approach.

"Well-trained, well-supported paralegals can squeeze justice out of imperfect and even broken systems. They amaze me every day."

– VIVEK MARU, NAMATI CEO



**NAMATI RIGOROUSLY EVALUATES AND DOCUMENTS** all of its grassroots efforts, and publishes both impact studies and guidance for practitioners. We aim for each of our experiments to inform practice worldwide.

# 340

**ORGANIZATIONS HAVE JOINED THE LEGAL EMPOWERMENT NETWORK**

# 2,600

**PEOPLE HAVE STARTED TO ACQUIRE LEGAL IDENTITY**

A community rights meeting organised by paralegals in a school in Rogbangba, Sierra Leone.  
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OUR IMPACT  
- GROWING  
THE MOVEMENT



As the chairlady and 'Mamie Queen' of the Sylvanus market in Makeni, Sierra Leone, Ya Yeabu Tarawalle resolves disputes between sellers. The country has a traditional law system that runs in parallel with formal courts.

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Left: Benedict Jalloh Director of Namati's partner, the Access to Justice Law Center, Makeni, Sierra Leone.

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Right: Farmers in Dwar Ther Hle village, Burma. The government constructed electrical pylons on their farmland which destroyed a season of crops. At first, the government refused to pay damages, but with paralegal Htay Lwin's support, the farmers were able to achieve an agreement for damages.

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## OUR IMPACT - GROWING THE MOVEMENT

Namati's global legal empowerment network has fostered learning and collaboration among hundreds of grassroots groups. That larger community has raised the profile of legal empowerment through the Kampala Declaration on Community Paralegals - which has been endorsed by 60 groups across Africa and cited in political debates over legal aid in several countries.

The network has supported a global campaign, in partnership with the Open Society Foundation and many others, to incorporate justice into the United Nation's post-2015 global development framework. Our open letter to the UN General Assembly has been endorsed by over 250 civil society organizations as well as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, Jimmy Carter, Mo Ibrahim, Fazle Abed, Ernesto Zedillo, Prince el-Hassan bin Talal, Madeline Albright, and Peter Gabriel.

From *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* to *The Bangkok Post* and *Hindustan Times*, and from the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* to *The Council on Foreign Relations* blog, Namati is raising the profile of the whole legal empowerment field.

**OUR IMPACT**  
- FRONTLINE  
JUSTICE SERVICES  
IN SIERRA LEONE



A soldier waits for a court session to re-start during a recess in Makeni magistrate's court, Sierra Leone.  
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Paramount Chief Ya Alimamy Manu Kargbo presides over an informal court in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

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## OUR IMPACT - FRONTLINE JUSTICE SERVICES IN SIERRA LEONE

In Sierra Leone, in the aftermath of a brutal civil war, Namati and its partners have grown community paralegal services to cover 40 per cent of the country. These paralegals have resolved thousands of disputes and grievances - 4,100 in 2013 alone - involving women's and children's rights, land and natural resources, and access to essential services.

Namati and a coalition of groups successfully advocated for a legal aid law that recognizes the role community paralegals play and calls for a paralegal in every chiefdom.

"The truth is that lawyers don't want to do everything that a paralegal will do. A lawyer will not travel for two hours to a village to find a surety. A lot of lawyers are not good at client care, they're not able to spend time in a prison supporting someone, or explaining a legal process, or making sure that a pregnant prisoner gets medical treatment. That's really the kind of work that paralegals do." - SABRINA MAHTANI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ADVOCAID, SIERRA LEONE AND MEMBER, LEGAL EMPOWERMENT NETWORK.

OUR IMPACT  
- CITIZENSHIP



Nahid Parvin, 20, is a paralegal working for the Urdu-speaking community in Dhaka. She says her work has changed her life. Although she is young, she has experienced a lot of respect from her community. "Everyone says *salam*, and they call me *madame*," she says. Parvin feels inspired to continue her work in development by training as a social worker.

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Left: A home in one of the crowded and crumbling camps for Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis.

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Right: A member of the Kenyan Nubian community holds up an ID card secured with the support of Namati's partner the Nubian Rights Forum.

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OUR IMPACT - CITIZENSHIP

In Kenya and Bangladesh, since February 2013, 17 paralegals have assisted over 2,600 people from historically stateless communities to overcome discrimination in applying for legal identity documents for the first time. Of these, more than 1,800 have already received documents. A legal identity can be life-changing – it opens access to

healthcare, education, and banking, among other things. Namati and its partners – the Council of Minorities in Bangladesh and the Nubian Rights Forum in Kenya – are using aggregate data from those efforts to advocate systemic improvements to national identity registration policies.

"When I tried to get an ID on my own, the officials treated me like a slave. They lost my documents, were rude, and did not take me seriously. With the paralegals, everything was different. With someone next to me, the government treated me with respect."

– HAMID TWALIB, 22, NUBIAN KENYAN, NAIROBI.

**OUR IMPACT**  
- COMMUNITY  
LAND PROTECTION



Main picture: Masethele village in Sierra Leone. Namati has taken up the case of villagers whose entire land has been claimed by a Swiss company.  
Inset: Namati guides that help rural communities understand how to protect their land.  
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Left: Villagers in Rivercess County, Liberia signing a boundary harmonisation agreement to end land conflicts.

Right: A sign above a village near Kampala, Uganda.

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OUR IMPACT - COMMUNITY LAND PROTECTION

In Mozambique, Uganda, and Liberia, Namati and its partners have developed a model for documenting and protecting customary land claims. The model has led to stronger protections for women's land rights, better governance and more sustainable management of land and natural resources, and the resolution of land conflicts. Our work has positively affected laws and policy in Liberia, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Kenya. In Liberia, Namati and its partner, the Sustainable

Development Institute, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Land Commission to deploy grassroots legal advocates to engage in community land protection throughout the country. Namati and its partners are scaling up efforts across Mozambique, Uganda and Liberia and supporting NGOs to adapt this approach in new countries.



**OUR IMPACT**  
- HEALTH  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
IN MOZAMBIQUE



Hortência, left, is Namati's Health Advocate in Southern Mozambique's Marracuene District. She escorted Elias 26 km to his nearest clinic after a nurse refused his right to a HIV test. She's now making sure no one else is turned away.  
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A community health advocate consults with a clinic nurse.  
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OUR IMPACT - HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOZAMBIQUE

In Mozambique, paralegals focused on the health system have resolved over 200 service delivery failures, including drug stockouts, lack of water supply, nurse absenteeism, and breaches of confidentiality. Here too, Namati is using aggregate

data from those efforts to advocate systemic improvements in health policy. This work won the Humanization Award from the Mozambique Ministry of Health in 2013.

**OUR IMPACT**  
- BRINGING LAWS  
TO LIFE IN INDIA  
AND BURMA



U. Tin, farmer and his wife,  
Nattalin Townships, Burma.  
The 87-year old is fighting in court  
against a tax imposed by the  
military to farm his own land.  
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Paddy farming and a handful  
of harvest in Pyay, Burma.  
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## OUR IMPACT - BRINGING LAWS TO LIFE IN INDIA AND BURMA

On the coasts in India, paralegals are working with fishing and farming communities to address violations of environmental law. In Burma, paralegals have supported 6,000 farmers to protect their land rights under a new registration process,

as well as settling disputes and resolving past land grabs. The work in Burma was a top five nominee for the Classy Social Entrepreneurship Award in 2014.



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Namati's major supporters to date are the Open Society Foundation, UK DFID, AusAID, and UNDP. Namati's advisory board includes Amartya Sen, Madeline Albright, Fazole Abed, Mo Ibrahim, Helen Clark and George Soros.

Namati is a Sanskrit word that means "to shape something into a curve." Martin Luther King Jr. said: **"the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."** We call ourselves Namati because we're dedicated to bending that curve.

**NAMATI** - INNOVATIONS IN LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

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