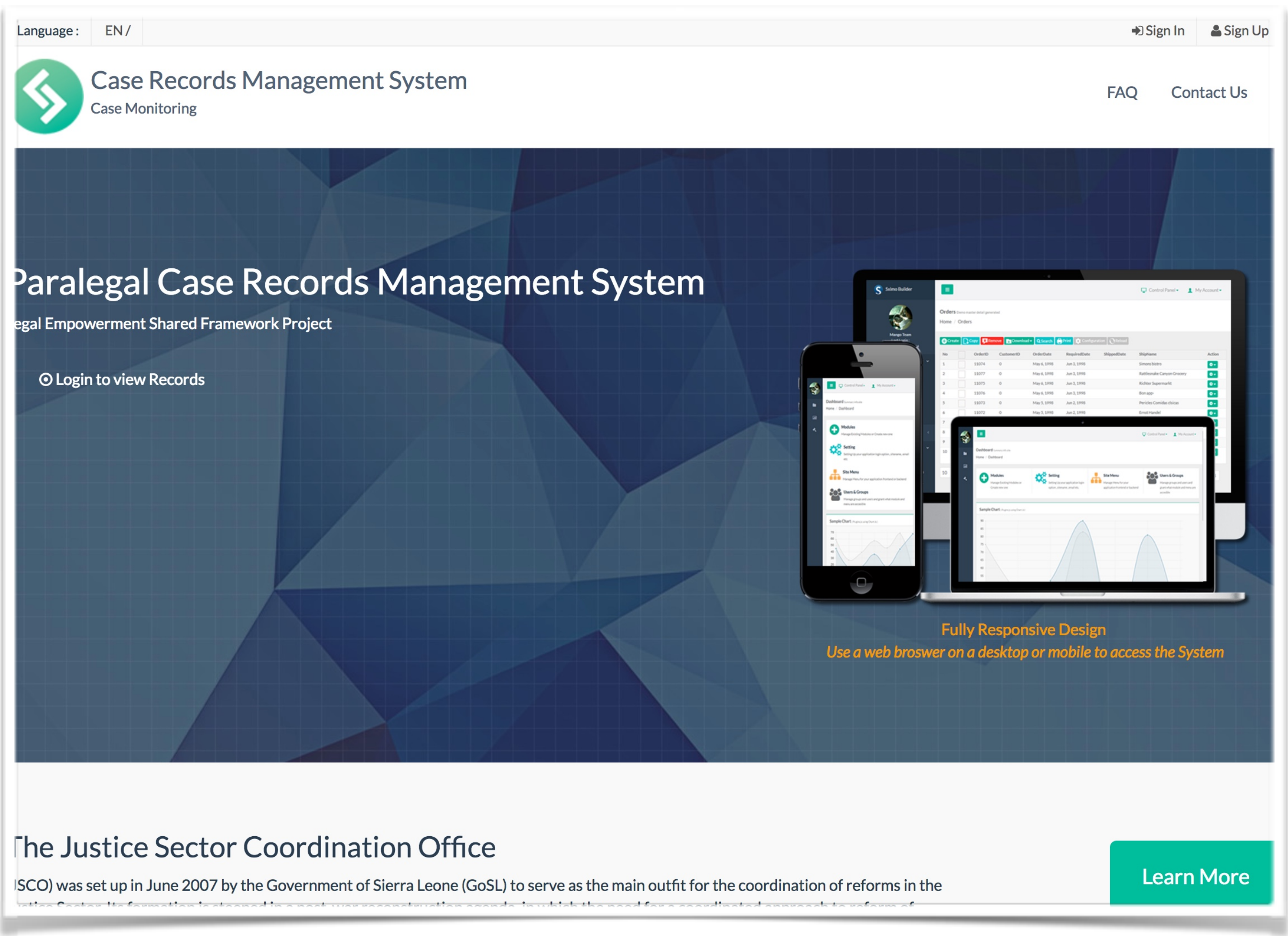
Case Records System Manual



The Justice Sector Coordination Office
Enhancing Justice Delivery

NAMATI
INNOVATIONS IN LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

OSIWA

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Introduction

The Legal Empowerment Shared Framework Project of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa is an intervention that aims to improve access to justice through the provision of primary justice services using paralegals in communities. The Project partnered with six Organisations offering paralegal services including the Legal Aid Board to deploy paralegals in various communities across Sierra Leone. The Justice Sector Coordination Office, being the central to justice reforms serves as the hub for managing the Data system with technical support from NAMATI.

This Case Records Management System comprises of a hard copy data form and a multi-User Web-based Data Management Platform. The system is developed to manage data generated from the work of Paralegals under the LESFP in a standard and secure environment. During the course of project, Paralegals will generate data cataloging actions taken to resolve each case as presented to their offices. This Case Records Management System is established for managing data in a standardised and synchronized manner that will promote uniform data collection and analysis while fostering shared learning.

The System has the following features:

- Hard copy and Web-Based;
- User-friendly Interface;
- Sever based hosting;
- Interface for multiple users, with inputting and editing privileges for Data Clerks and Supervisors of Paralegals respectively;
- Contains analytics with ability to generate accurate reports including the use of graphs, charts and tables; and
- Controlled and secured user environment with readily available technical backstopping and support.

THE CASE INTAKE FORM

The main Sections of the Form

The case intake form has two sections. These are the **client intake** section and the **case resolution** section.

The client intake section collects personal information of the client, such as name, address, age and gender. It also captures data on the nature of the client's complaint, how the client learned about the paralegal service, how the client reached the paralegal office, to which institutions the case was previously taken, among others.

The case resolution section collects data on the reasons for ending the case, the nature of the result if the case was resolved, the institutions engaged in the resolution of the case and the tools used by the paralegal to resolve the case.

The **client intake section** is filled out on the day the case is admitted while the **case resolution section** is filled out when the case is resolved and/or when it is closed**.**

The Case Status

☐Case Opened/Pending
☐Agreement/Solution Reached
☐Monitoring
☐Case Closed

This is the dashboard of the case. It shows the development phases of the case. It gives a quick signal of the state of the case. The opened/pending box is checked on the day the paralegal admits the case, the others can be checked as the case develops. It should also be checked when agreement or a solution is reached, when the solution or outcome is being monitored and when the case is finally closed. By just looking at the case status, one should be able to determine the progress of the case. It is a useful indicator for supervisors and those interested in monitoring and evaluation.

Case File Number

The case form makes provision for every case to be uniquely identified. The illustration below shows how the case file number should be written out:

XX — M / YY — Sn

Paralegal's unique Number ..

Month case admitted

Year case admitted

An alphabet(S) and a number (n), the alphabet is the first letter of the client's surname/last name and the number distinguishes between clients with the same first letter for that month. Numbers are assigned serially.

As illustrated above, the format is XX-MM/YY-Sn. XX is the paralegal's number. MM/YY is the month and the year the case is admitted. S is the first letter of the client's surname/last name. N is a number that distinguishes between clients whose surname/last names start with the same letter.

- **Example 1: I**f paralegal Joseph Conteh (whose paralegal number is 02) admits cases from Mr. Brima Koroma and Mrs. Adama Kamara in April 2017, then the case file number for Mr. Brima Koroma should be 02-04/17-K1 and for Mrs. Adama Kamara is 02-04/17-K2.
- **Example 2:** If paralegal Joseph Conteh (with paralegal number 02) admits three cases, (child neglect, debt and marital problem) from Elizabeth Sesay on the 19th April 2017. The case number for the first case, if Elizabeth is the first client with a surname/last name beginning with S, will be 02-04/17-S1, 02-04/17-S2 and 02-04/17-S3. The case file numbers are assigned in the order her cases are presented.
- **Example 3:** For clients with compound names such as Isha Taylor-Kamara, the case file number should reflect the first letter of the first name in the compound name. In this case we take the T for Taylor instead of the K for Kamara.

Note:

1. The case file numbers are based on individual paralegals and not an office.
2. Even if the case is admitted on the last day of the month, as long as the client's first letter of his/her surname/last name is the first of that type in that month, it should be P1 or S1 or J1 as the case maybe.
3. For every new month, the case file numbering starts anew.

Case Type

Choose the appropriate case type that applies to the issue reported. In cases with multiple issues, you are allowed to choose all the case types that apply, but make sure the primary case type is underlined for easy identification. There is provision for "other" if the issue before you does not fall under any of the case types.

<u>**Note**</u>: make sure you do not create unnecessary case types when there is a case type that covers that issue.

E.g. do not write 'wife beating' in the 'other' space when 'domestic violence' is there as a case type. Also please do not write "charging fee for free health care drugs" when "health" is there as a case type. Creating many "other" case types when there is a case type provision, will make data analysis ineffective.

Summary of the Issue

This does not require many words. Provide a one sentence summary of the main issue in the client's statement. There is no need to write too much here as the full statement is attached to the case file.

Fields with Multiple Choices

Several fields allow you to choose more than one option, such as **Previously Brought Before, Institutions Engaged, Tools/Resources Used.** Make sure you choose all the options that apply to the case.

Managing Copies of Case Forms

Every case should have its own Case intake form that captures various information about the client(s) and the case as shown above. The Paralegal should fill out <u>**three copies**</u> of the case form for every case he/she admits:

- Copy 1 always stays in the Case File.
- Copy 2 goes into a folder marked **New Cases Folder** after the "Client Intake Section" has been completed. All cases in this folder may be sent to a central location for online data input.
- Copy 3 is kept with Copy 1 in the case file and both are filled out as the case progresses until it is closed. When the case is closed or resolved, Copy 3 should be put

into a folder marked Closed Cases Folder. All cases in this folder may be sent to a central location for update of data into the online database.

Why multiple case forms? This is to ensure that copies of the filled-out case form could be easily sent to another location without affecting the case file.

New Cases Folder

- The New Cases Folder contains Copy 2 of the Case Record for every case handled by an office. Copy 2 goes into the New Cases Folder immediately after a paralegal has completed the "Client Intake Section" for a new case.

Closed Cases Folder

- The Closed Cases Folder contains Copy 3 of the Case form for every case handled by an office. Copy 3 goes into the Closed Cases Folder only after a case has been closed and monitoring (if necessary) has been completed.

Each organization should develop a procedure of convening copies 2 & 3 of case intake forms to the Headquarter Office or data entry centre. Directors/Managers/Lead Paralegals or M&E officers could collect the case forms in the New & Closed Cases Folders every time they visit an office and transmit them to the Headquarter office or data entry centre. The information on Copy 2 and 3 are then entered into the electronic database by the Data Clerk.

Reopening Cases

The two boxes below are only considered when something happens in a case which had been resolved and closed, warranting it to be reopened. The "**agreement later broken"** field (which is found at the bottom of the case resolution section) on the old case is checked, and the reopening field (which is found in the client intake section just under the case status) on the old case is checked, and the reopening field (which is found in the client intake section just under the case status) on the reopened case form is also checked. The case file number of the old case is written in the space provided.

☐Agreement later broken
☐Reopening Old Case (______________________)

The Database

- Headquarter Offices should designate a specific office that would maintain the electronic database containing information/data from every single case the paralegals are working on.
- All of copies 2 and 3 should be sent to that specific office where the person in charge of data entry should correctly capture the case data.
- Copy 2 is sent immediately the case intake section is filled and copy 3 is sent when the case is closed.
- The data officer, M&E or Lead Paralegal in charge of the database will enter the information into the electronic database.
- The computer holding the case database should be kept away from others, as it contains sensitive information of clients. This is a way of keeping clients' details confidential and also prevent any form of interference with the system which may possibly lead to loss of data and system malfunctioning.

Case Activity Log

The Paralegals are expected to note the details of all actions taken on a case in the Case Activity Log. These actions will include accompanying a client to court, following up with client via phone or visiting a client's house. It could also include visits to client at correctional centre, conduct of mediation, signing of documents or collecting money from a party. Any action on the case, no matter where it takes place, should be recorded in the case activity log. For every action taken on a case, the outcome should be recorded accordingly. The next steps with specific dates should be clearly stated by the paralegal. You only stop writing next steps when the case is closed. As long as the case is not closed, it should be alive with specific next step(s). Below is a layout of the action log and an illustration of how to fill out the action log.

Log of follow up activity (continue on additional pages as needed):			
Date	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Next steps**
17/02/17	*Admitted client's case*	*Statement was written down*	*Write a letter to the other party on the 18/02/17*
18/02/17	*Invitation Letter written to party B*	*Party B was served and promised coming to the office*	*Interview party B to get his own side of the case on the 22/02/17*
22/02/17	*Party B' failed to come to office as scheduled, I called him to follow up*	*Party B' apologized promised to come to the office on the 25th Feb. 2017*	*To interview party B and get his own side of the story on the 25th Feb. 2017*
25/02/17	*Party B' came to the office*	*He was interviewed and gave his own side of the case. He consented to a mediation*	*To call and inform Party A' tomorrow 26th Feb 2017 for a mediation scheduled for the 1st Mar 2017*
01/03/17	*Both parties came to the office and mediation was conducted*	*Mediation was successful and a mediation agreement signed-see attached copies of agreement. Parties were given copies*	*Party B' is to make first payment on or before the 1st April 2017*

Only one copy of the Case Activity Log is required and it always stays in the case file with copy

Note: Every paralegal should maintain a diary to keep track of appointments, follow up dates and next steps for follow ups actions. We suggest that managers of organisations should provide diary for their paralegals every year.

Referrals (internal): If you refer a case to another office of the same organisation, make photocopies of all documents in the Case File (Copy 1, Copy 3, Case Activity Log, statements, etc.) before handing over the file. The paralegal referring the case (i.e. the paralegal that owned/opened the case) should always keep the original copy of the case file.

Referrals (External): the paralegal should not send case file or even action log or any of the documents to another organization/institution. The best to do is to send a referral note stating the problem and summarizing the case and what the paralegal has done and why the referral.

Workflow chart for case intake form

Complete the "Client Intake Section" on three copies of the Case Record. Check the "Case Opened/Pending" status checkbox on each Copy and mark the appropriate box (Copy 1, Copy 2, Copy 3) on each sheet.

- Keep Copy 1 in the Case File.
- Place Copy 2 into the New Cases Folder. Directors and Lead Paralegals will collect Copy 2 when they visit your office.
- Copy 3 stays with Copy 1 until the case is closed. Always update Copy 1 and Copy 3 at the same time so that they are always identical.

Follow-Up

Regularly update the Case Activity Log and your Ledger with activity details (e.g. investigation, mediation, etc.).

The Case Activity Log stays in the Case File. You will maintain only one copy of the Case Activity Log, but remember that any changes to the Case Record must be made on both Copy 1 and Copy 3.

(If an agreement fails during monitoring, work with parties to implement the agreement, renegotiate the agreement, or pursue

Parties Reach Agreement/Solution

Complete the "Case Resolution Section" on Copy 1 and Copy 3 of the Case Record.

Client Withdraws Case or Client/Parties Do Not Respond

Complete the "Case Resolution Section" on Copy 1 and Copy 3 of the Case Record.

Agreement Requires Monitoring

Write in the "Will Monitor Until" date and check the "Monitoring" status checkbox on Copy 1 and Copy 3 of the Case Record.

Write reminders in

Agreement Does Not Require Monitoring

Write in the "Date Closed" and check the "Case Closed" status checkbox on Copy 1 and Copy 3 of the Case Record.

Agreement Fails

Note failure in Case Action Log and check "Agreement later broken" box in "Case Resolution

Agreement Implemented

Write in the "Date Closed" and check the "Case Closed" status checkbox on Copy 1 and

Case Closed

Place Copy 3 of the Case Record into the Closed Cases Folder. Directors/Manager/M&E officer/Lead Paralegals will collect Copy 3 when they visit your office.

Your paperwork for Case Management System is now complete. The information you provide on Copy 2 and Copy 3 of the Case Record will be entered into database in the headquarters/centre for data inputting.

Remember that the Directors/ M&Eofficer/Lead Paralegals collect Copy 2 and Copy 3 from the New Cases and Closed Cases Folders every time they visit

The Web-Based Data System

Accessing the Portal

The Database is accessed via the internet. To access the Database, type the web address ***"localhost/myapp/public"***[1] into a web browser and click enter. The Home Screen (Figure 1) will open with the login button situated at the top right hand corner of the screen.

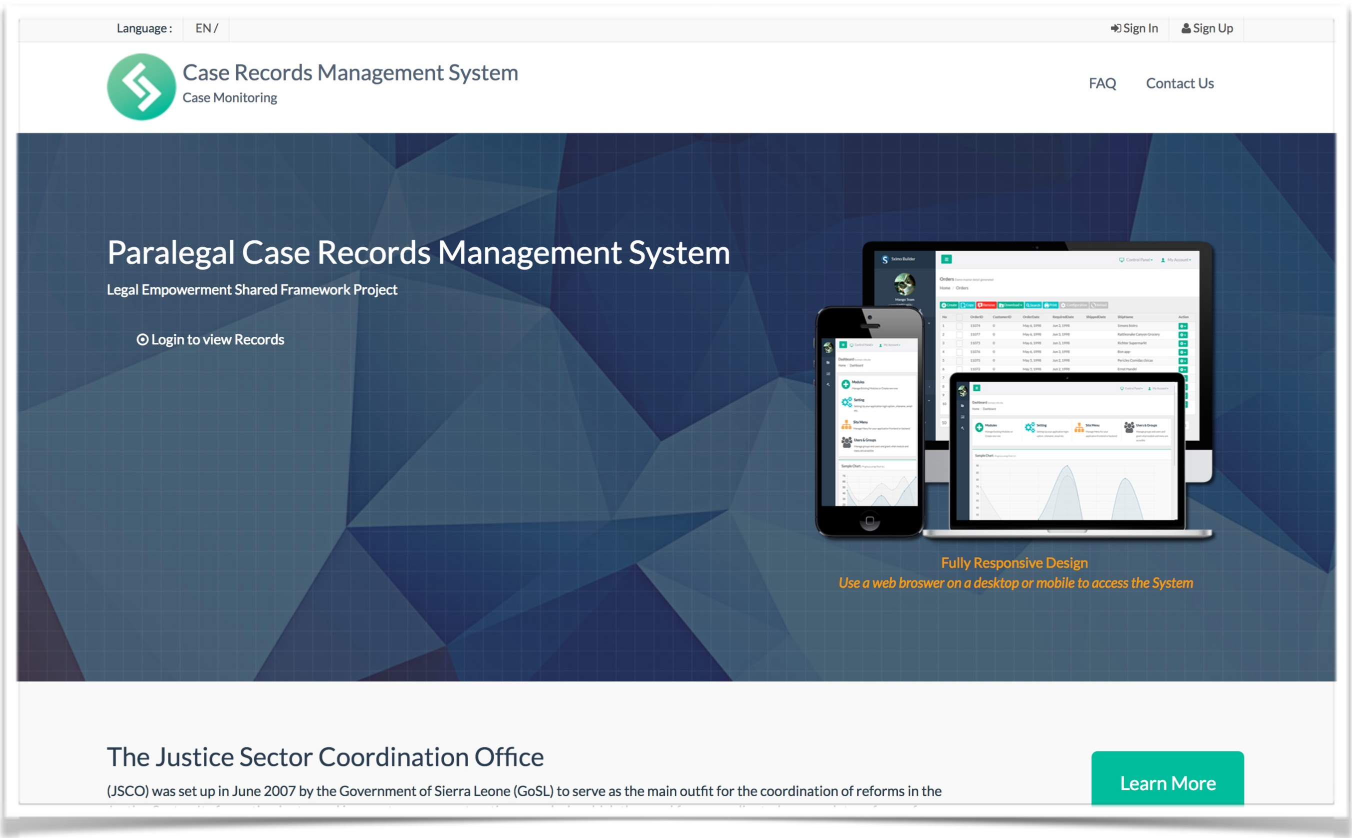


Figure 1: Data base Home Screen

[1] The web link will be communicated via email

How to Log into the Portal

From the Home Screen, clicking on the "Sign In" button will lead you to the Log In Screen.

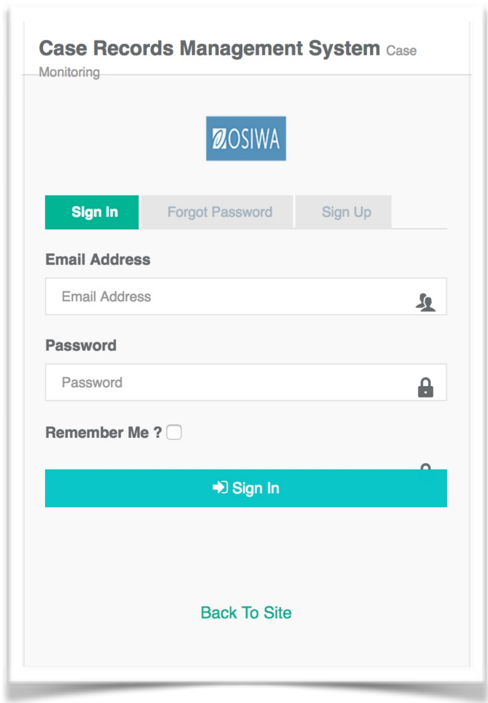


Figure 2: Log in page

The first time you access the portal, you must enter your User Name (i.e. email address associated with the account) and temporary password that you have received via email (Figure 2). The portal will automatically ask you to create a new password that you can use for logging in from now on.

Note: Remember to write your password in a secure place where no one else can access it. Your password should be easy enough for you to remember but difficult for another person to make-up.

Once you have logged in, you will be taken to the Dashboard (Figure 3) where you'll be able to view, create and also do analysis on the data depending on the level of your access level.

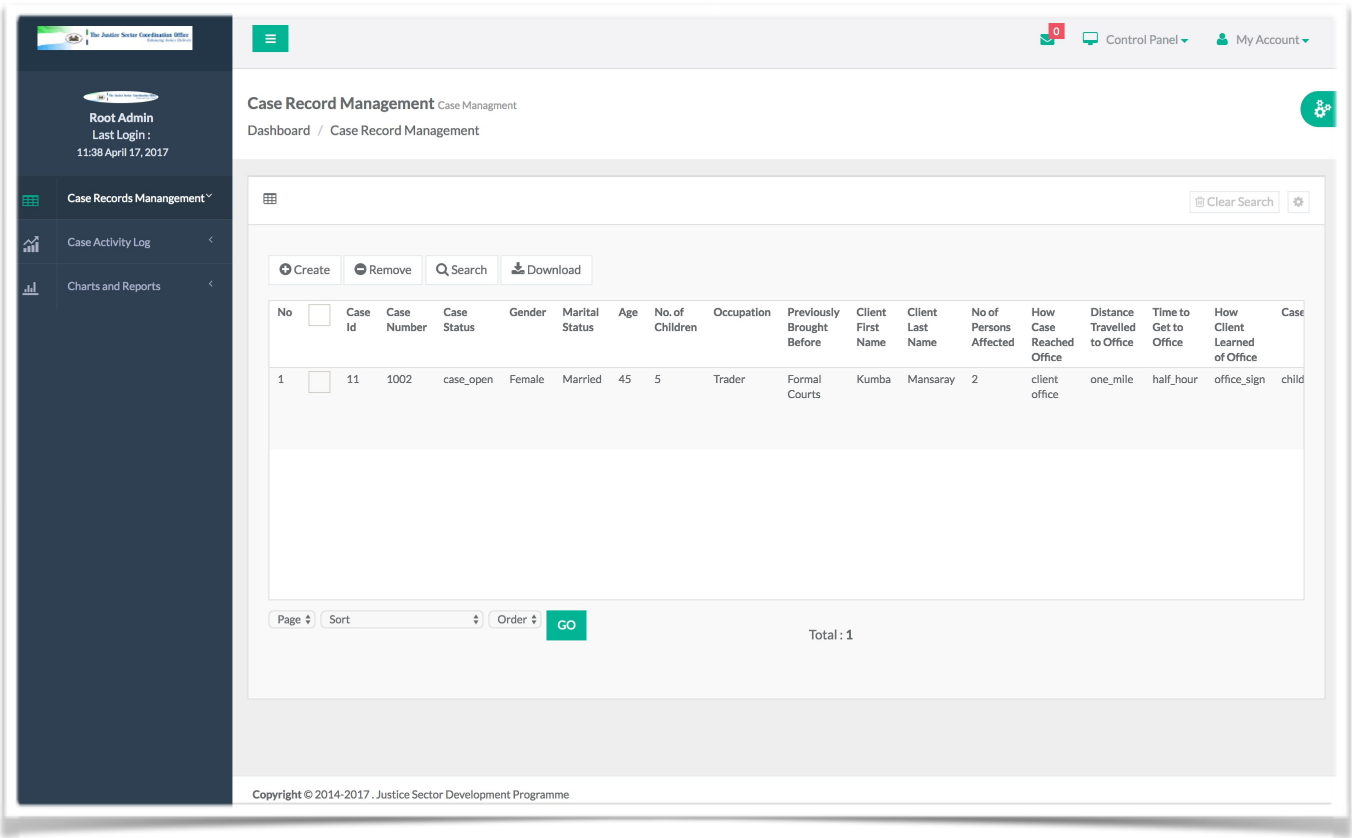


Figure 3: The Dashboard of the platform

How to Enter Data

Please note there are two tabs available in the data entry section which are the **Client Intake Section** and the **Case Resolution Section**.

Client Intake Section: this section collects personal information about the client (*Figure* **4**).

Creating a new form: Clicking on the "Create" button will open the Data Entry Section. In here, you will be able to enter data into various fields.

The Case Status: This is a drop down list from which you are expected to choose the status appropriate for the case being handled

Case File Number: In this section, please input the **exact unique identifier** generated on the hard copy form.

Case Type: In this section, please enter the primary case reported first. This is underlined in the hard copy form. Once the primary case type has been selected, proceed to add the subsidiary cases reported.

Note: While only one primary case can be entered into the system, you can enter as many subsidiary case types as you want**.** Also, you should avoid creating new case types when they are clearly represented in the dropdown list.

Summary of the Issue: It is important to be succinct in this section. The Database allows for only 500 characters to be entered in this section as such the summary has to be just that! Paralegals and Data clerks must ensure they capture the substance of the case in few words to enable proper analysis of this section.

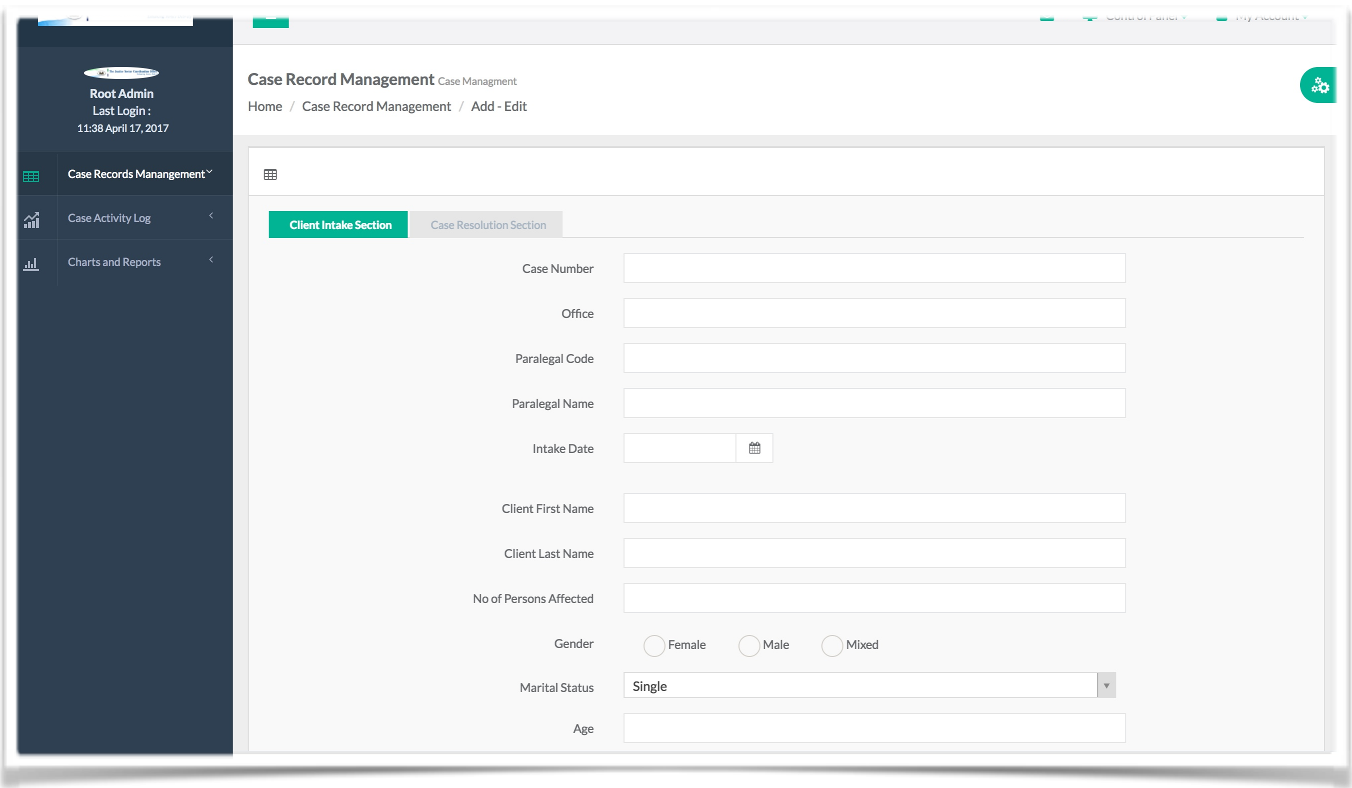


Figure 4: Intake Section Interface

At the end of the form there are three buttons as shown below (Figure 5);

- **Apply Changes**
- **Save**
- **Cancel**

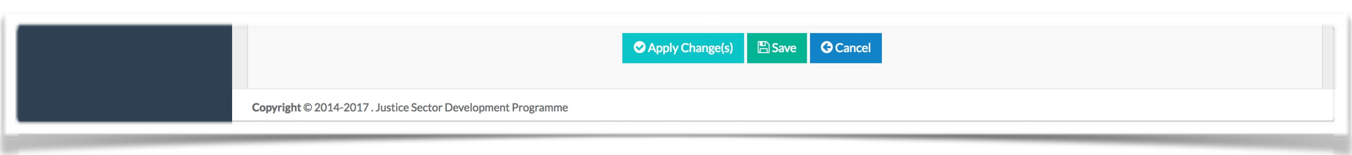


Figure 5: Saving changes

Apply Change(s):

Clicking on "**Apply Changes**" will go through the entry made and make sure all the mandatory fields have been filled in the respective section. If there's an error, it'll point you to the field with the error in order to make the necessary changes.

Save:

This button will save the entered data. After you have saved the data the software will automatically go to the dashboard under which you can see the data saved.

Cancel:

Clicking on this button will delete all the records you have entered in the database. The Cancel button will take you back to "Create" interface to start entering the data anew.

Note:

Every action taken on the data base is automatically catalogued and accessed by super-administrator (JSCO). Avoid making changes that are not properly thought-through as you will be required to justify these actions by the Monitoring Team.

Case Resolution Section: this section collects data on the reasons for ending the case, the outcome/result and the persons/institutions involved.

How to Review Saved Data

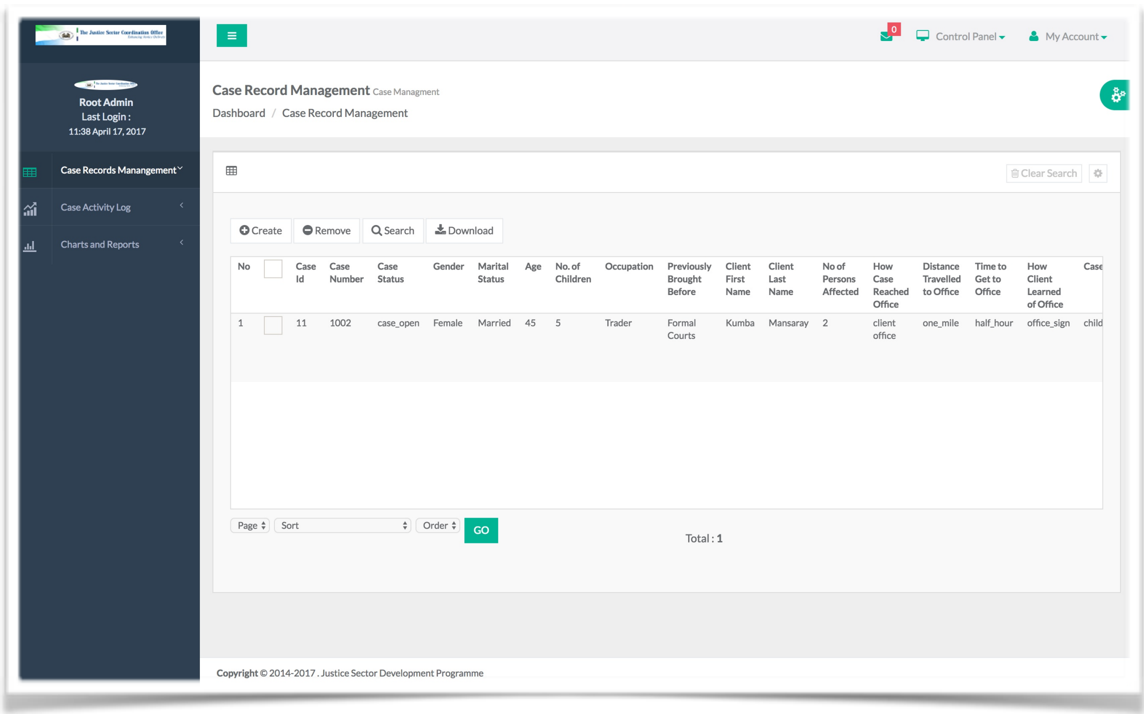


Figure 6: List of Cases in the Database

Clicking on the Case Records Management menu on the top left corner of the screen will show you all the entries with the various columns listing all the fields (*Figure* **6**).

Scrolling to the extreme right will show an 'Actions column' from where you can either view the data or edit it.[2]

Clicking on View (the icon with the Magnifying Glass will show you the full information of data entered into your institutions portal.

[2] Only the Administrator is able to edit the data.

The Dashboard in Figure 7 shows the list of all data entries made by one institution while Figure 8 shows details of a case entry. This is viewed when you click on the magnifying glass on the right hand side of each entry.

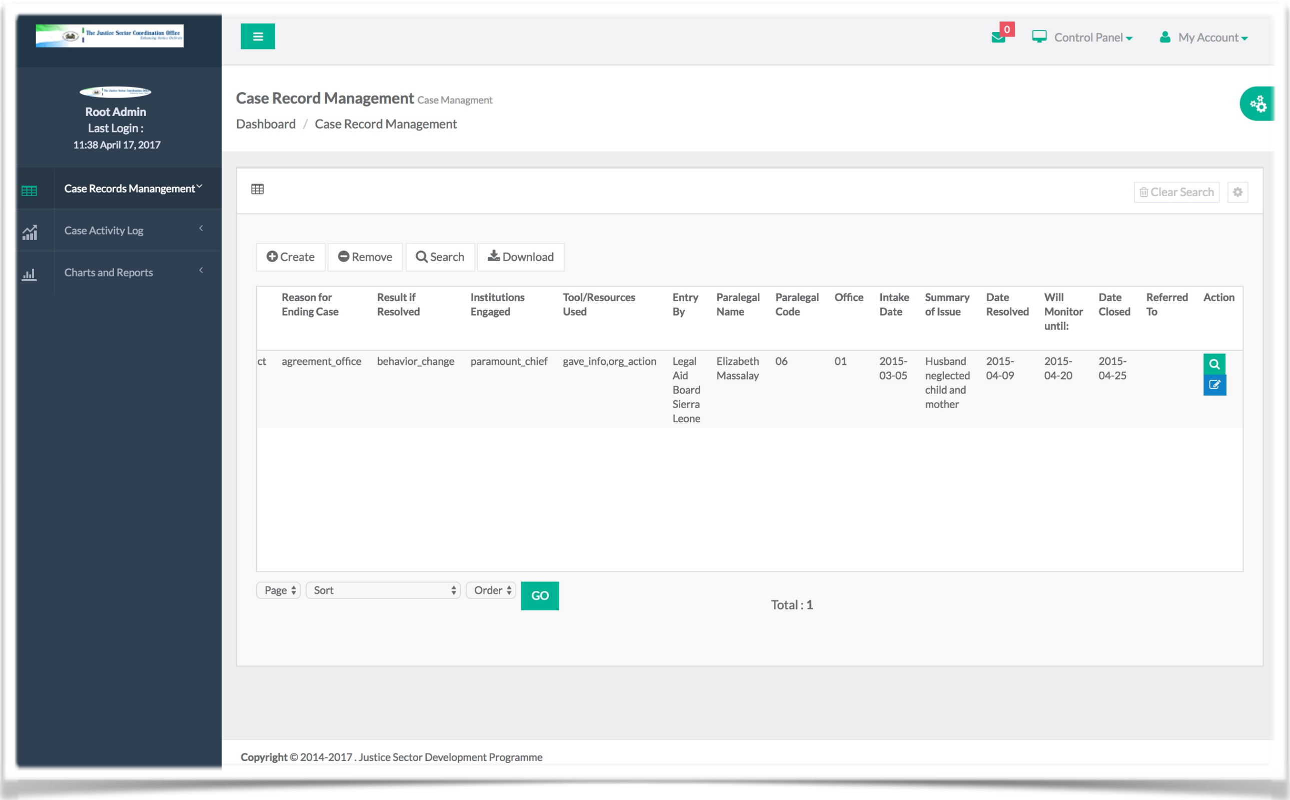


Figure 7: Case Record Interface

Case Id	11
Case Number	1002
Case Status	case_open
Gender	Female
Marital Status	Married
Age	45
No. of Children	5
Occupation	Trader
Previously Brought Before	Formal Courts
Client First Name	Kumba
Client Last Name	Mansaray
No of Persons Affected	2
How Case Reached Office	client office
Distance Travelled to Office	one_mile
Time to Get to Office	half_hour
How Client Learned of Office	office_sign
Case Type	child_neglect
Reason for Ending Case	agreement_office
Result if Resolved	behavior_change
Institutions Engaged	paramount_chief
Tool/Resources Used	gave_info,org_action
Entry By	Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone
Paralegal Name	Elizabeth Massalay
Paralegal Code	06
Office	01
Intake Date	2015-03-05
Summary of Issue	Husband neglected child and mother
Date Resolved	2015-04-09
Will Monitor until:	2015-04-20
Date Closed	2015-04-25
Referred To	

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Figure 8: Case Entry Details

Case Activity Log

Immediately below the Case Resolution Section is the Case Activity Log.

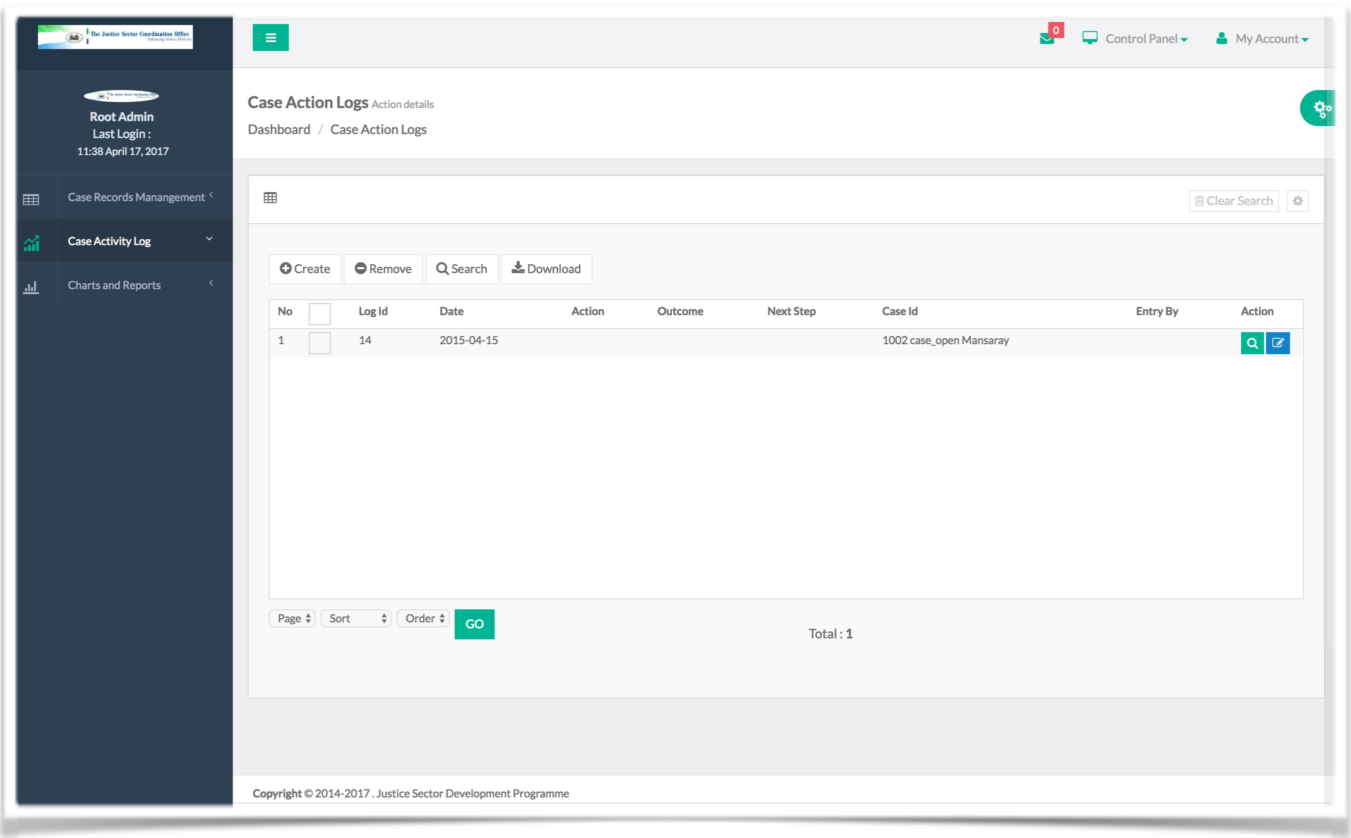
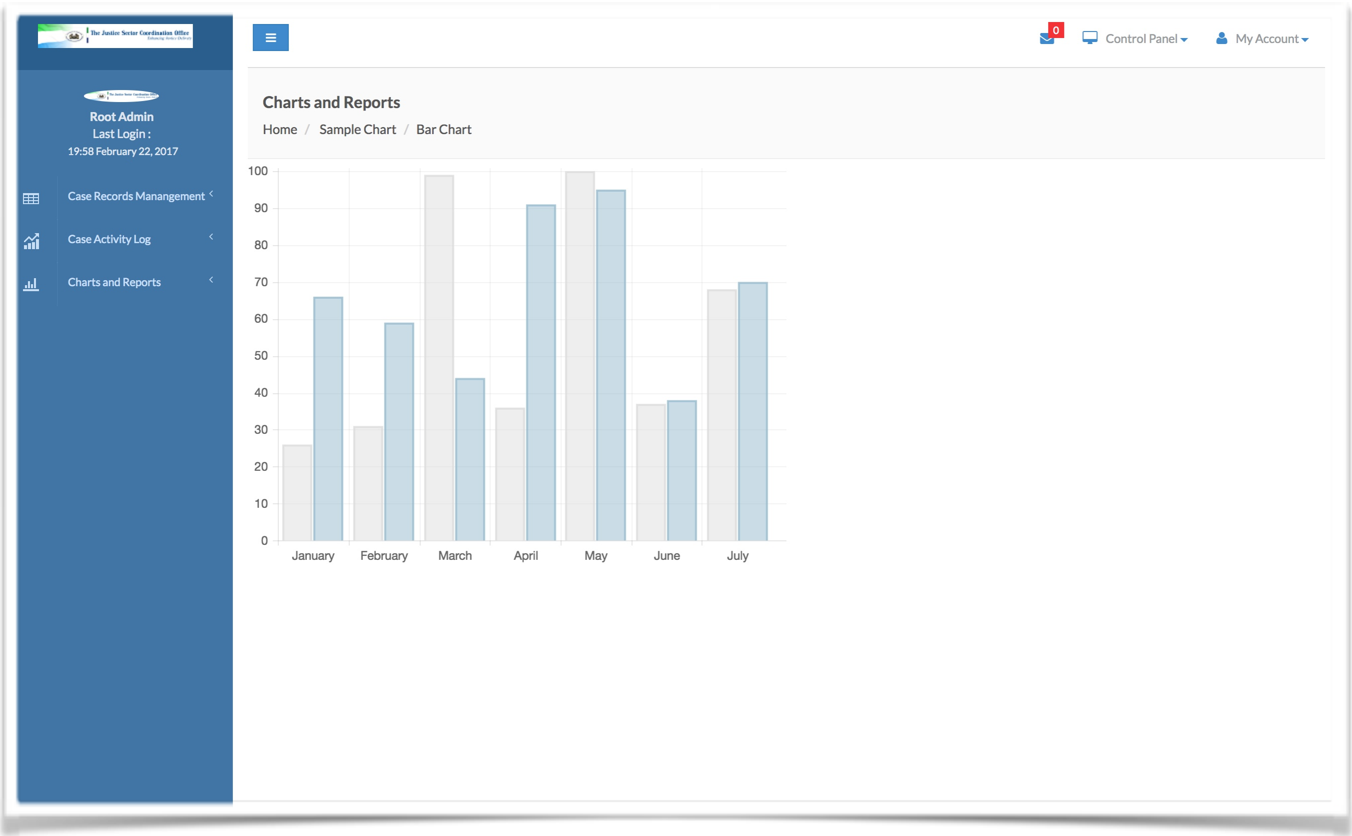


Figure 9: Case Activity Log Interface

The Case Activity Log tracks (Figure 9) the various stages of the case, from the opening to the closing of the case.

Each Paralegal is expected to record the daily action taken on each. These actions will be recorded including the “Next Step” to be taken on the case.

Analytics



The Charts and Reports section is the analytics aspect of the Web Platform (Figure 10). This is used to generate pie charts, bar charts and line graphs of the data entered for analysis and simple reporting purposes.

Figure 10: Analytics Interface

Downloading Data for further Analysis

The data entries can be downloaded in either CSV or Excel format for further statistical analysis. To download data, go to the dash board and click on the download button. Select either Excel or CSV button to determine the data format. Once this is done, click enter and save data onto your desktop or secure external drive.

Profile Management

Under Profile Management (Figure 11), you can include details of the organization, including but not limited to their logo. It is also where the password can be changed in the event there is need to facilitate change. This feature is however not available to Paralegals and Data Entry Clerks.

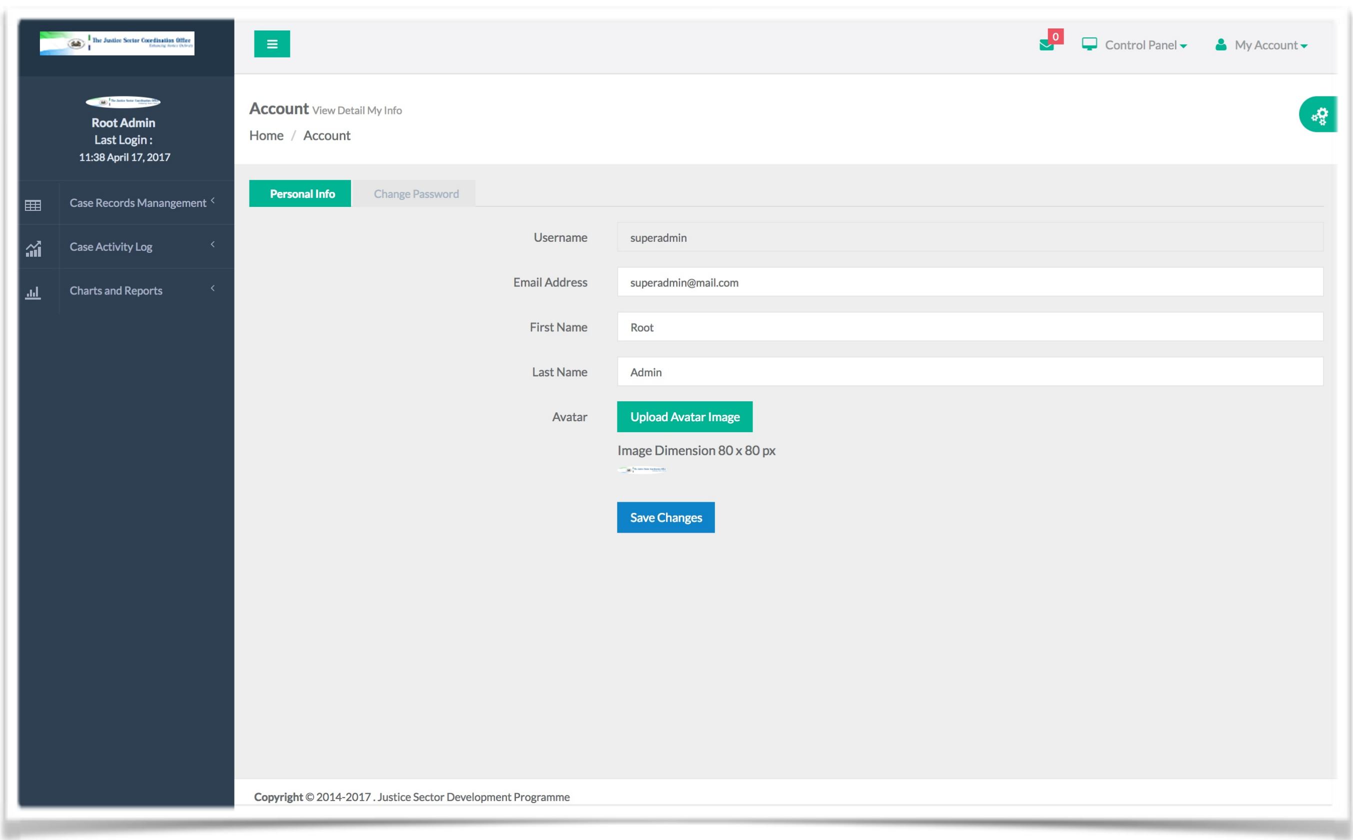


Figure 11: Profile Management Interface

System Administration

This is the menu for the Super-Admin User (Figure 12). From here, the super-admin would be able to modifier the behavior of the application and also be able to create users, delete users, change the theme of the UI(User-Interface) and also be able to reset users' password. It also has a lists of the various users of the application showing their last activity which will help in monitoring who's logged in at any given time.

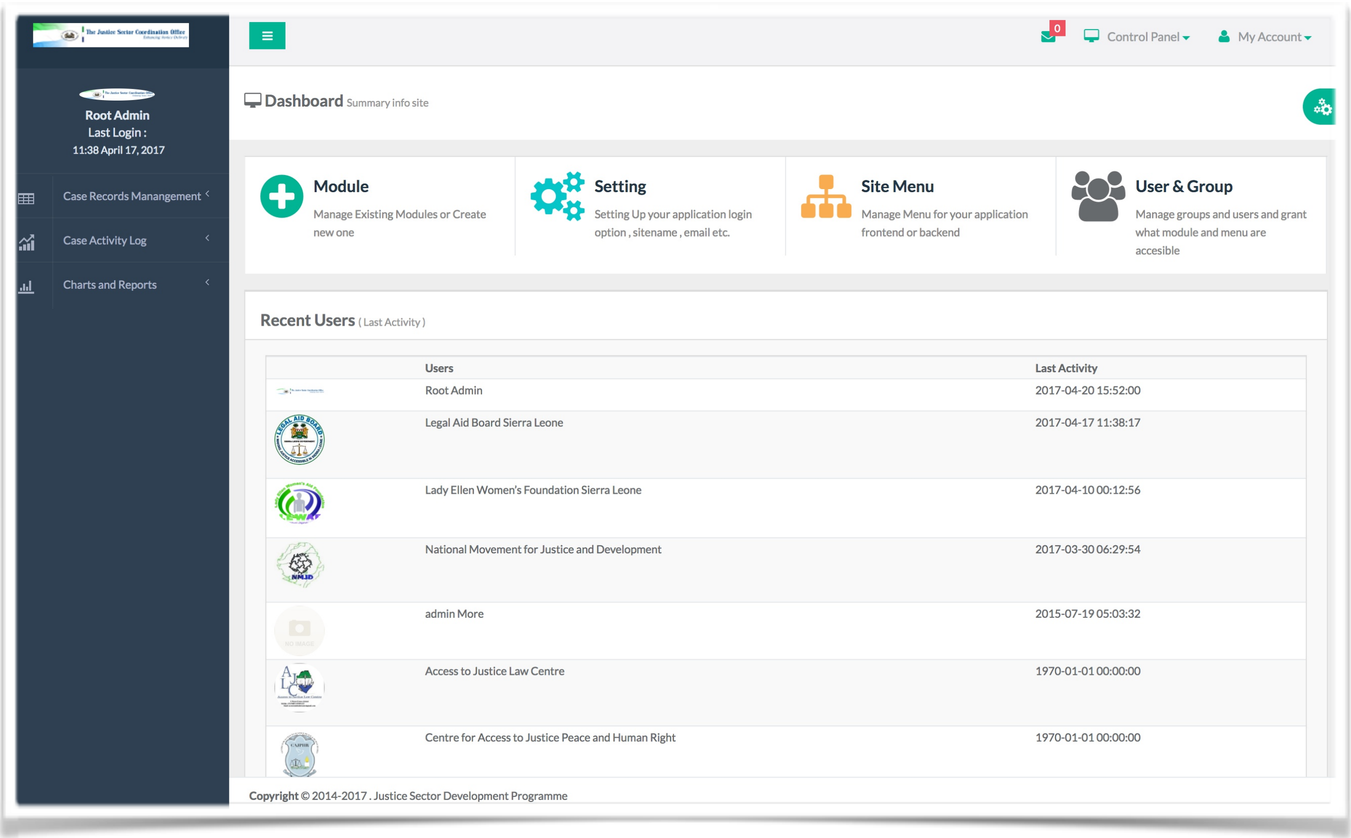


Figure 12: Super Administrator Interface