

## HRLA Bursary Scheme 2022

The Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and British Institute for International and Comparative Law ([BIICL](#))

### 1.1. Personal background

My interest in human rights stems from my lived experience growing up as a child in the [Niger Delta](#) region of Nigeria. Surrounded by the devastating impact of oil pollution on the livelihood and health of people in my local community, resulting from crude oil production and refinery, I was determined to make a difference in some way.

Focusing on my studies as a digression, I graduated with First Class Honours in Agricultural Economics. I was awarded a scholarship by the American Association of University women for my postgraduate studies at the University of Edinburgh where I studied Resources Management at Masters level. My research work focused on public participation and economic empowerment as routes to sustainable development in the Niger Delta Region using the operations of Shell and Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation as case studies.

I began my career as a Human Resources Manager at Procter and Gamble focusing on the recruitment, training and retention of diverse talents from the diaspora and across Africa. I subsequently became the Diversity and Inclusion Manager for P&G WA where I developed a 5-year diversity and inclusion strategy, significantly improving gender equality within the organisation in less than 6 months.

### 1.2. Motivation

My interest in human rights has grown following my recent post graduate studies at the University of Law during the pandemic. My thesis was focused on determining to what extent changes to the provision of civil legal aid have delivered against the objectives of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) with respect to access to justice at pace for female domestic violence (DV) victims and their children.

I obtained a Distinction for my research work which made novel recommendations including early interventions in the process of obtaining legal advice and representation such as legal one-stop-shops targeting “clustering” of legal issues, rather than piece-meal solutions tailored to fit LASPO’s reduced scope of issues eligible for legal aid; funding support for litigants to access legal advice/representation at critical litigation stages including child arrangement order and financial remedy final hearings; a revamped Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) scheme, in particular covering initial application costs for legal aid lawyers; and the use of online technology to alleviate court backlogs and delays that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 1.3. Relevance and value

Public legal education is the bedrock of a democratic society. My internship at the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law provided me with an invaluable insight into the implementation of public legal education and challenges facing access to justice policies. [Bingham Centre’s Public and Youth Engagement programme](#) is one of the most influential vehicles in the country delivering public legal education and driving the vision of access to justice especially for the most vulnerable in our society.

The core of the work is based on independent, rigorous and high quality research and analysis, focusing on the most significant Rule of Law issues of the day and making strategic and impartial contributions to policy and law making, with a view to defending and advancing the Rule of Law through research based proposals and practical recommendations.

## 2.2. Role

As the 2022 Human Rights Lawyers Association / Bingham Centre Public and Youth Engagement Fellow, I was privileged to have worked with some of the brightest legal minds in the area of public legal education, human rights and international and comparative law. I was warmly welcomed from day one and felt at home throughout the internship.

My internship involved working with a team of volunteers to deliver public legal education at secondary schools and other youth institutions around the country. I arrived at a challenging time as two members of the team were moving to other roles. It was also the end of the academic session necessitating completion of projects with tight deadlines. The internship provided great insight into the intersections of theory and practice in various aspects of human rights. I was tasked with conducting a stakeholder analysis of Bingham Centre's potential partnership with young citizens at every step of their journey with the law and made some recommendations for strengthening the contributions of the organisation in this area.

I was also involved with database management and contributed to discussions involved in political strategy around parliament. I was afforded an invaluable opportunity to share my work with the wider team during a team seminar and was privileged to have my research findings featured on the [BIICL Newsletter](#), a weekly update read by Members of the Parliament especially law politicians within the House of Lords and the Justice Committee.

## 4. Closing Comments

I was specifically attracted to the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law because of the outstanding influence that Lord Bingham's principles continue to have on access to justice today. It was fulfilling to know that my contributions and expertise are respected in influencing the work of the organisation. It was empowering and inspiring to be in a situation where my organisation has the authority to question and influence government policy in the area of human rights.

The consequences of international human rights conflicts tend to have a disproportionate impact on women and children from ethnic minority, a trend I have experienced first-hand. There is therefore a common good in having someone with lived experience to engage in conversations at a wider policy level in this area.

As a young, ethnic-minority woman, it was a privilege to leverage my rich, lived experience garnered over the years to convey practical insights during my internship at the Bingham Centre. I believe my work and life experiences enabled me to be able to add some value in strategic public legal education while demonstrating a level of empathy and advocacy for the vulnerable that would be difficult to rival.

Finally, the Bingham Centre's Public and Youth Engagement programme is a very powerful and inspirational mechanism for public legal education and it would be a privilege to be part of the team that takes the conversation forward.