

CLIFFORD CHANCE PICKS THE EQUALITY EFFECT AS WINNER OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD 2014

Press Release

3 November 2014

- Malcolm Sweeting, Roger Leese

Leading international law firm Clifford Chance has named The Equality Effect as the fifth winner of its annual Access to Justice Award and awarded a Commendation to the Mental Disability Advocacy Center.

The Equality Effect (e²), which is a registered charity in Canada, uses human rights law to make girls' and women's rights real, particularly in relation to education and health and to fighting sexual violence. e² plans to use the Award, which consists of a £50,000 donation from the Clifford Chance Foundation and 500 hours of pro bono work, to implement a landmark court ruling by the High Court of Kenya which ordered "prompt, effective, proper and professional investigations" into child rape cases. The case was developed and coordinated by e² to address the systemic failure of the Kenyan police to investigate allegations of child rape. The Award will help train 70,000 Kenyan police officers in best practices in these types of investigations and be used to develop an app for police use, provide legal advice on achieving charity status in the US and UK, expand projects into Malawi and Ghana and help improve contacts in the region. Non-legal volunteers will be involved in public education campaigns, marketing, communications and fundraising.

The Award's first-ever Commendation has been awarded to the Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC). MDAC offers wide-ranging support to people with mental disabilities, using strategic litigation to advance their human rights. The Commendation will provide MDAC with 500 pro bono hours that MDAC plans to use to encourage local-level implementation of judgments from supranational bodies, with a particular focus on the Czech Republic. Non-legal support will help to implement PR and communications strategies and establish a new web interface.

Roger Leese, pro bono partner at Clifford Chance, said: "We are proud to announce The Equality Effect as the winner of our 2014 Access to Justice Award and are delighted that this year we have been able to award a Commendation to MDAC. We are excited to work with e² and MDAC, which, while in different spheres, share our commitment to expanding access to justice for society's most vulnerable."

Fiona Sampson, Executive Director of The Equality Effect, said: "Women and girls around the world suffer unthinkable oppression and disadvantage, including sexual violence, lack of education and the inability to own property. We know that the law can be used as a crowbar to pry open justice for these women and girls, empowering them and achieving social justice. With this award, we will be able to expand our successful projects including '160 Girls', our legal knowledge and our contacts. We look forward to working with Clifford Chance."

Oliver Lewis, Executive Director of MDAC, said: "Over 100,000 people in the Czech Republic are subjected to dehumanising conditions in disability institutions, locked up and segregated from their families. The partnership with Clifford Chance will help us and our civil society allies to put pressure on the authorities to stop abuses happening now and enable everyone to lead independent, flourishing lives in the community."

Clifford Chance received 69 nominations from 20 countries for the award. A large number of applications came from organisations involved in strategic litigation, in advocacy through support for other organisations, and in furthering women's and children's human rights. An independent group of external and internal judges helped to select the winner, looking for not-for-profit organisations that help individuals, groups or communities preserve or secure their rights to the basic necessities of life.

The Clifford Chance Foundation co-ordinates the firm's charitable giving, which is focused on three principal themes: Access to Justice, Access to Education and Access to Finance. Around half of its annual £1.2 million budget is used to support Clifford Chance's global NGO clients, while the remainder is distributed to Clifford Chance offices globally to contribute towards local community projects.