

# Justice for All: Making a difference

Improving Magistrate, Customary and Sharia Courts

“ Anyone will be able to see the difference in our work when you take a look at our case management data. It is unique because there was nothing like this before.”

Name: His Worship Bashir Shittu

Profile: Senior Magistrate at Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Kaduna

#### The story so far:

I am a magistrate at one of the J4A pilot courts in Kaduna. Some of the challenges the courts experienced in the past include; missing case files, noise and disturbance during court proceedings (Ibrahim Taiwo courts are located on a very busy road) and dilapidated court structures. There were also institutional challenges because we had no yardsticks for assessing performance, no realistic focus, we just did things as a routine.

The various training provided by J4A in partnership with the state judiciary has opened our eyes to a lot of things. Take for example, the training on the Evidence Act 2011 which some of us did not even know existed. The training helped us understand some of the sections of that law.

As a result of the training on performance management, my colleagues and I are now more focused, we are able to set realistic targets and we know how to achieve those targets e.g. case disposal, time management, etc. We now know and recognise the supervisory roles that we play in the system to ensure that court staffs do their job. Court bailiffs are now more careful with the way they handle proof of service, and there is also a noticeable improvement on the mode of service. Executions of judgements are faster. Bailiffs who have taken the J4A training have been taught not to compromise on standards as they are now aware that they hold positions of trust and they have to be accountable.

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#### What happens next?

The performance management system has been presented to the Judicial Service Commission for adoption and application across the state.

“ The intervention also supported the renovation and the supply of equipment to offices. This has increased staff passion for work which is reflected in the speedy dispensation of cases. Staff now adhere to practice direction suggested by the J4A programme. of Lawyers and Prosecutors.”

Name: Prince Charles Onyia

Profile: Member Customary Court Maryland, Enugu State

#### The story so far:

“There were no clear operational direction. Judgements were often very lengthy and voluminous, Presentations were clumsy, uninteresting and did not have the appropriateness of a sound judgement. Judgement writing was the sole prerogative of the Chairman . There were incessant and frivolous adjournment of cases. Staff were intimidated by the appearance of the lawyers in the court.

The J4a supported training, has developed staff skills. They now have the capacity to attend to the necessary details required and the speedy dispensation of cases. They are now able to determine the number of witnesses required for a case thereby curbing to a large extent frivolous adjournments.

As a result of the training supported by J4A, judgements are now better written, very clear and concise. Judgements are now written by a panel unlike the previous one man panel (The Chairman).

The intervention also supported the renovation and the supply of office equipments. This has increased staff passion for work which is reflected in the speedy dispensation of cases. Staff now adhere to the practice direction suggested by the J4A programme. We now have the capacity to protect weak litigants (especially first comers) against the intimation of lawyers and prosecutors .”

#### What happens next?

Justice for All will continue to work with the customary courts in Enugu to develop the capacity of its staff to use the newly introduced case management system to generate data on concluded and pending cases.

# Improving Lower Courts

DEVELOPING LOWER COURTS TO DELIVER EFFICIENT AND EQUITABLE JUSTICE SERVICES



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# Improving the service provided by Magistrate, Customary and Sharia Courts

## We aim to:

- Support selected lower courts to deliver more efficient and higher quality justice services
- Increase understanding among court personnel that justice is a service that should be provided with the appropriate level of care and in an equitable manner
- Encourage court users to demand for higher standards of service from their courts
- Create an understanding of the need for accountability and monitoring of courts
- Demonstrate the positive impact of the improvements in the lower courts on the judiciary as a whole

## We are working to:

- Improve the skills and capacity of judges and court officials to deliver professional services
- Develop standard operational procedures for the basic functioning of different types of lower courts - Magistrate, Customary and Sharia courts
- Build the capacity of oversight structures and bodies to provide relevant services in the lower courts
- Encourage the replication of good practices in the selected courts to other lower courts in the state

## Why:

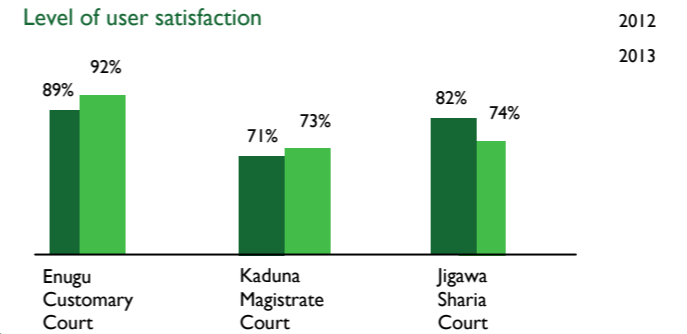
- Most people seeking formal justice do so through the lower courts
- Kaduna State lower courts handled 70,786 cases, while higher courts handled 4,076 cases in 2009/10 (*Component Intervention Plan*)
- In spite of higher relative case loads, lower courts have suffered from a lack of investment for many years
- Lower courts are unable to provide the quality of service that users have a right to expect

## How:

- Assessment of the causes of inefficiency and poor service delivery in lower courts
- Training of judges, court staff and inspectors in case management, court user service, inspections, etc.
- Development of policies, guidelines and tools to enhance better service delivery
- Review of disposal rate of cases and developing case management system

# Getting Results

## Facts and Figures



## Spotlight on Gender (in Jigawa Sharia courts)

- 56 court staff trained on equal treatment and gender rights in the lower courts
- Renewed commitment and understanding by court heads and staff to gender equality in all aspects of their work

## Highlights to date

### All courts

10 courses developed for training of court staff and inspectors: (1) Case Management, (2) Records Management, (3) Powers and Jurisdiction of Courts, (4) Role and Responsibilities of Bailiffs, (5) Ethics and Code of Conduct, (6) Equal Treatment and Court User Service, (7) Court Inspections, (8) ADR and restorative justice, (9) Judgement writing, and (10) Evidence

### Enugu

- Draft time standards developed for magistrates courts
- Complaint desk/system now functional in customary courts
- Inspections and time standards now institutionalised in customary courts

### Kaduna

- Time standards and inspections adopted through practice direction for customary courts
- Draft performance management framework developed for all lower courts
- Time it takes to dispose of cases in Magistrates reduced to 252 days in Sept 2013 (from 593 days in August 2011)
- Time it takes to dispose cases in Sharia courts reduced to 14 days in Sept 2013 (from 52 days in Dec 2012)

# How we are achieving impact

