

Leading change through the *Speeding Up Criminal Justice* project



No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile

Article 9, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR)

Prison services in many developing countries including Nigeria face various challenges. Often they have to work with poor facilities and very little resources, most of which are over stretched. In many cases, they do not have enough or accurate information about who is in prison, what the person is being held for and how long they have been in detention. Even where adequate record systems are in place, these are usually collected through the use of *ad hoc* or unsystematic data collection processes.

Effective prison reform that brings about change is only possible when there is a good information management system in place to provide information on what is happening in the prison and to support decisions made by those in authority. The Speeding Up Criminal Justice Project is a J4A intervention working to address issues in the Nigerian criminal justice sector that slow down the delivery of justice, leading to a range of negative effects including over-crowding in prisons and the subsequent human rights implications especially since the majority of inmates in the country's prisons have yet to be convicted of a crime.

In July 2012, with J4A's support through the Prisoners' Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA), a Case Management Unit was commissioned at the Prison Headquarters in Enugu state. The prison case management system provides information on all prisoners in the four prisons in the state.

The Nigeria Prison Service has been struggling with the problem of overcrowding for many years. Many prisons in the country are congested with records showing facilities accommodating twice or three times the number for which they were originally built. In March this year, using information from the case management system, over 100 prison inmates were released. This was done under the jail delivery exercise; a prison decongestion process approved by the Federal Government. The prisoners set free had been awaiting trial from between 10 months to 10 years.

According to Ugonu Nwaeze, an Assistant Superintendent at the Nigeria Prisons Service Headquarters in Enugu, "With this system in place and with the case record forms being used, it is now possible to search for inmates in the system by gender, age, crime, religion, state of origin, length of stay etc. The system makes it possible to track what is happening to every inmate in all the prisons in Enugu."

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How Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can help in increasing the response to sexual abuse

Keeping statistical information on cases of violence against women and girls is essential if action is to be taken to raise awareness of the problem and secure the support of government and non-government agencies to address it.

CSOs need to:

- ☞ Ensure case forms are always available and are filled accurately and completely
- ☞ Document key details and events regarding each victim in their respective files in a manner that can be easily extracted for statistical purposes
- ☞ Keep case files in a secure place and ensure only authorised persons can access them
- ☞ Keep back up copies of documents in a safe place, especially if the main files are stored electronically
- ☞ Take special care with the storage of digital and sensitive materials e.g. videos, photographs, etc.
- ☞ Maintain registers of cases, where necessary, excluding personal details but including data that is useful in identifying and analysing trends and likely risks

The organisations listed below offer various services and support for female victims of violence:

Legal Defence and Assistance Project
www.ledapnigeria.org

Partnership for Justice (PJ)
www.partnershipforjusticenig.org

Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP)
www.womensrightsandhealth.org

Project Alert on Violence Against Women
www.projectalertnig.org

Source: Guidelines for Responding to Cases of VAWG in Lagos state - available on the J4A website

Tackling sexual abuse in Lagos

On Monday July 1, 2013, the J4A grant-funded Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) also known as the Mirabel Centre opened its doors to the public in Lagos. The Centre provides treatment, counseling and information for victims of sexual assault in an environment where each individual's needs and rights are respected.

With support from St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Manchester, United Kingdom, 30 doctors and nurses have been trained on forensic medical examination; 20 counselors have been trained to provide support to victims, and an information system has been installed to capture data on incidents of sexual assault in the state.

Of the five cases seen in the first week of the Centre's work, four were children and the fifth victim, a young adult with mental health issues. All had been referred to the Centre by the police.

The SARC works hand-in-hand with the Family Support Unit (FSU) in the Model Police Station in Agege, Lagos where police officers and social workers have also been trained on how to respond to incidences of gender based violence. The Centre will provide services to all victims irrespective of gender, religion, age or social background.



School children at play in Enugu state

"Positive change is possible in Nigeria."

Kayode Fayemi, Ekiti state Governor

ACSI makes a case against gender based violence

The Agege Community Safety Initiative (ACSI), formed with support from J4A, is a community safety partnership comprising of senior representatives of local agencies, civil society organisations, and community representatives in Agege, Lagos. Experience from around the world shows that many issues that affect the safety of citizens cannot be solved by a single agency.

Following a safety survey carried out by ACSI, a gender based violence working group has been formed as this is one of the identified priority issues affecting community safety and people's perception of safety in the Agege area.

The aim of the working group is to improve the support, treatment and care of victims of gender based violence, to raise community awareness of the support available for victims and to encourage greater reporting of the crime.

To raise awareness of the role of ACSI and the aim of the working group, a public event was held in May 2013. At the event, Alhaja Komolafe of the market women association said, "This programme should have come before now! Rape is rampant in Agege, husbands beat their wives and if we report them we will be thrown out of our home."



A police officer speaking at the event in Lagos state

Model Police Station takes off in Enugu

A Model Police Station (MPS) is a police station that integrates the concepts of community policing, community safety, neighbourhood policing and crime prevention with the aim of creating an environment where responsibility for the prevention of crime and improving community safety is taken up by the public, the police and communities.

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) with support from J4A is implementing an MPS at the Central Police Station in Enugu. The Abakpa-Nike and Awkunanaw divisions have also been selected as stations where some of the new practices from the MPS will be disseminated and replicated.

Workshops held with the Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) heading the three stations, Bassey Ewah, Eke Mba and Innocent Emerie show that there is much enthusiasm for the ongoing work. The DPOs and their management teams have been introduced to the benefit of reorganising the station so that it is more welcoming to citizens, the advantage of the police being more visible through street patrols, the use of pocket notebooks to instantly record any information they receive, and having a special unit to deal with gender-based violence (the Family Support Unit).

DPO Bassey Ewah commented: "If we can get 50% of this implemented it will make a real difference! All this training is helping us become better police officers."



Abakpa-Nike Police Division, Enugu state

"And it must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

Niccolo Machiavelli (1532)

Here come the village mediators...

The J4A supported Community Paralegal and Village Mediation Programme (CPVMP) operates in four rural communities in Enugu state: Ogwuogo, Nara, Eha-Amufu and Nkerefi. To date, twenty-two community members have been trained and are now certified paralegals. Though not lawyers, the paralegals have received legal training and are able to provide basic legal information and guidance, and promote legal and human rights awareness to their fellow community members. The paralegals are also trained mediators.

Empowering communities to manage and resolve their own conflicts contributes to peace building and also creates an understanding of how conflict can escalate if left unchecked. The paralegals have been working to improve the resolution of matters such as family disputes, land matters and petty offences. Where the issues are more serious, they provide legal information and referral to a lawyer or the police.

The paralegals who have been trained as trainers recently completed the training of 150 village mediators (VMs). They are now in the process of mentoring the VMs to ensure they maintain high standards of service delivery as they start their work in their different communities.

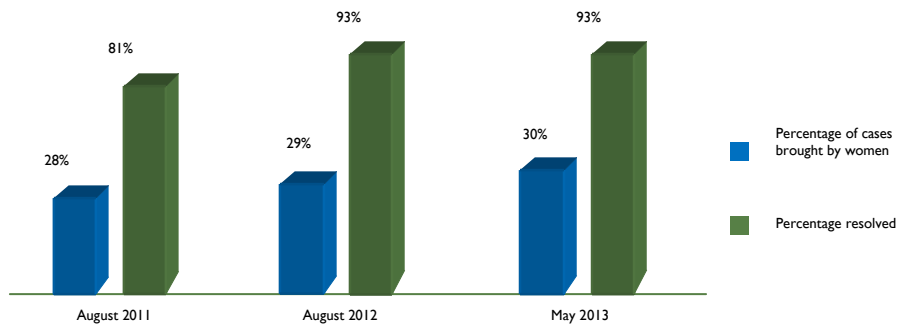
Igwe Jonathan Obe Agu, a traditional leader in one of the CPVMP communities said, "We have high levels of poverty here. The VMs will help my people to settle their disputes at no cost. The money they would have spent using formal processes can now be spent on food and other necessities."



Paralegals at work in Enugu state

Do you know...

...the record keeping system for traditional justice systems (TJS) in Jigawa state is making a difference for women; records show that there has been an increase in the number of cases brought by women between August 2011 and May 2013; of the 690 cases brought before traditional rulers and recorded between July 2012 and March 2013, 206 were brought by women.



Cases brought before traditional rulers by women in Jigawa state

“The lack of a record keeping system can complicate a case. A case of witchcraft allegation happened between two neighbours in Birnin Kudu town which was resolved by the TJS. However, one of the parties took the case back to the formal court. Because there was no record of the settlement originally agreed with the TJS, the case went on for a very long time before it was eventually resolved.”

Interview on the benefits of the record keeping system with Zainab Adamu Gumel, Public Relations Officer of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Jigawa state branch

Highlights from our work on the Speeding Up Criminal Justice project

- The Speeding Up Criminal Justice project is running in Enugu state and the Federal Capital territory (FCT).
- The average number of days Awaiting Trial Prisoners (ATPs) spent in custody in December 2012 in Enugu state was 474; down from 683 in March 2011
- The average number of days ATPs spent in custody in the FCT in December 2012 was 383 days
- The court monitoring exercise in Enugu shows that about 53% of cases are unnecessarily adjourned
- Enugu state is using publicity (witness attendance posters) to increase attendance in court by witnesses
- According to the Nigeria Prison Service, the total inmate population of prisons in Nigeria was 53,816 at 30 April 2013



A prison officer at Enugu prison

What an intern has to say...

On Monday 24 June 2013, Nnenna Abah, a student at the University of Hull walked into the J4A office in Abuja. She was here to begin a two week internship with the programme.

Nnenna had this to say at the end of the two weeks: “My two week internship at J4A was a very fun yet informative time which exceeded my initial expectations.”

“I participated in activities such as the training of trainers for the Basic Policing Skills course, and the grant application workshop, which I found very helpful.”

“I believe that this internship has given me the opportunity to be in a work environment and has also cemented my decision to pursue a career in development related issues.”

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