

WRAHP Sensitizing Communities on the Domestic Violence Law in Lagos State



Sexual/Gender Based Violence stakeholders at the domestic violence law awareness raising event in Igando/Ikotun.

The J4A programme provided support for the simplification of the Domestic Violence (DV) Law in order to improve and increase the understanding of the law by citizens. Following this, WRAHP marked the 2015 International Women's Day by organizing a community sensitization walk aimed at raising awareness on the simplified state DV law.

The event was held at the Igando/Ikotun market area and LCDA of Lagos State with about 300 participants of diverse groups, including 100 women representatives from the Women's Affairs And Poverty Alleviation Ministry (WAPA), Igando/Ikotun LCDA, members of the Working Group of 8 on Violence Against Women, media, police (including a few JWC personnel), Lagos State Ministry of Justice, Office of the Public Defender, WAPA Lagos state, the community peer educator cluster groups (known as the anti-GBV ambassadors of WRAHP) and other stakeholders.

During the event WRAHP applied the skills they had learnt from the J4A capacity building workshop on fundraising to raise more funds and extend the dissemination of the law. They also distributed the simplified DV materials that were supported by the programme.

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Administration of Criminal Justice Bill Passed by both Houses of National Assembly

The Administration of Criminal Justice (ACJ) Bill, which has been pending for the past decade, has now been passed by both houses of the National Assembly (NASS) as a result of J4A's support in reviewing the Bill and advocating for its passage. While the House of Representatives passed the ACJ Bill last year, the Senate passed the Bill in early 2015.

The programme also supported public hearings, discussions and the collation of CSO inputs which were included in the ACJ bill. J4A also provided assistance to the Technical Committee of the Panel on the Implementation of Justice Reform (PIJR) who were responsible for articulating the submissions of stakeholders' input following public hearings in the NASS.

The Bill is aimed at addressing the numerous challenges facing the criminal justice system such as undue delays in the progression of cases during investigation, prosecution and adjudication; inconsistent regulations for the bail of suspects; the indefinite remand of suspects by lower courts which has contributed to the high number of awaiting trial prisoners which accounts for more than 70% of Nigeria's prison population.

Advocacy efforts are currently ongoing to ensure that President Goodluck Jonathan signs the bill into law before the handing over on May 29, 2015.

Know Your ACJ Bill

Some key innovations introduced by the ACJ Bill include:

- 1 The establishment of time limits for the remand of suspects by lower courts**
- 2 The introduction of alternatives to custodial prison sentences such as community service and probation**
- 3 The licensing of "bail bondspersons" who will be responsible for perfecting bail conditions when granted by courts.**

Pilot Information Desk in Sharia Courts Improves the Delivery of Justice in Jigawa State

The information desks established in two Sharia Courts in Jigawa State with the support of the J4A Programme are now delivering positive changes especially for court users.

The information desks are designed to assist with user inquiries, provide information regarding their cases and enlighten users on court procedures.

Judges and court staff have all attested to the changes in the attitudes and the behaviors of court users. For example, court users are no longer timid and fearful when presenting their cases. They are now confident and aware of what is required of a litigant as a result of the awareness and the enlightenment services provided by the officers at the information desk.

Most of the court users are not represented by lawyers and as such are ignorant of court procedures. The information desk officers assemble litigants to explain court processes, procedures and expectations on Mondays and Thursdays before court sittings. It provides users the opportunity to clarify previously held misconceptions/myths about courts and Judges.



Desk officers addressing female litigants on court procedures and their rights

Abubakar Abdu Gwaram, one of the information desk officers, believes that the work of the information desk if sustained will increase public confidence in the Sharia Court and the justice system in general.

Massive Support for the PCC's Complaint Boxes in FCT Communities

As part of the intervention aimed at improving the accountability and responsiveness of government institutions the J4A programme is working to enhance the capacity of the Public Complaints Commission (PCC) so that it can serve as an avenue for the public to advocate against corruption and improve access to justice for the poor.

As a result of the support from J4A the PCC recently received several commendations from members of the FCT traditional rulers, community leaders, the general public and heads of key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as it embarked on the distribution of Public Complaints Boxes in all the Area Councils across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The distribution of the public complaints boxes provided the much needed opportunity for the FCT PCC to interface with its core constituency - the poor and ordinary members of the communities who yearn for a listening ear and a voice to attend to their complaints against corruption, related administrative injustices and service delivery failures within their communities.

The exercise brought about large community support for the commission and the boxes that were distributed.



The Honourable Commissioner, the Etsu of Kwali Alhaji Shaban Audu Nizazo III, Kwali District Heads and the Commission's Kwali Area Office Staff during the installation ceremony at Etsu's palace

Improving the Organizational Effectiveness of the Code of Conduct Bureau

Following the support provided by the Justice for All Programme to all the Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs) on developing and implementing their strategic plans the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) has taken a step further by organizing a 2-day retreat aimed at ensuring proper understanding, effective implementation and the validation of the final strategic plan.

The outcome of this event has resulted in the smooth implementation of the CCB's strategic plan. For instance all activities are being implemented and have been completed within the allocated time especially the policy documents which have been developed and submitted to the board for approval. Monthly review and assessment meetings are now being held to ensure strict adherence with the laid down guidelines.

These are usually followed up with reports submitted at the monthly board meetings.

The Strategic Plan Management Committee is now in the process of creating activities for the State and FCT offices to complement the efforts being made in the headquarters.

“...There are clear changes in the approach to work in CCB. We are gradually mainstreaming routine activities into the strategic plan and more beneficial results are being achieved”

**Prince Okechukwu Nwadinobi
Commissioner CCB**

Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases Now Part of Judges Performance Evaluation

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, is promoting and helping to increase the use of the Multidoor Court Houses (MDCs) in Nigeria.

His commitment to promoting the MDCs was made known when he confirmed to a delegation of the Association of MDCs which visited him that cases resolved through MDCs and other Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, will henceforth be a part of judicial officers' performance evaluation, which is undertaken by the National Judicial Council (NJC). He believes that this will increase the number of cases being referred to MDCs and ADR centres in the country.

The CJN further revealed that in order to maximize the use of MDCs, the number of cases settled through ADR will also be considered as a criteria for the award of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) for lawyers.

The CJN promised to ensure that the judiciary establishes MDCs in all the states of the federation.

“These policy statements when implemented will boost the practice of ADR and increase the utilization of MDCs/ ADR centres in Nigeria”.

Replication of the Sexual Assault Referral Center in Lekki Lagos State

The Eight Foundation having been inspired by the work of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) which is supported by the J4A programme, has launched a counselling and rehabilitation centre in Lekki, Lagos State for the victims of sexual/gender based violence (S/GBV). The centre started operations on 23rd March 2015 and hopes to scale up its services in order to create a one-stop centre that follows the model of the SARC.

The Eight Foundation have developed strong links and sought guidance from the SARC. They have already referred one of their cases to the SARC for medical assistance and have reached out to a number of justice sector institutions like WAPA, MOJ, and OPD for collaboration

The J4A programme is currently assisting the centre by sharing examples of lessons learnt from the SARC and helping to facilitate and establish a relationship with the police in the state.



Interview rooms for the victims of S/GBV at the Eight Foundation in Lekki, Lagos State (adult room left, children room right)

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