



# Training for Judiciary Support Staff

## (Enugu, Jigawa and Kano)



Security, Justice and Growth

**DFID** Department for  
International  
Development

**BRITISH  
COUNCIL**



## SJG stakeholder consultations identified the lack of regular training for the judiciary as a factor that hindered the effectiveness of the justice system

**DFID Nigeria's Security, Justice and Growth (SJG) programme** worked to improve access to, and the quality of safety, security and justice for poor people and their livelihoods.

**Through the SJG programme**, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and Nigerian partners were working to realise the values, principles and goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Summit Declaration: peace, security, development, poverty eradication, human rights, democracy, good governance, protecting the vulnerable and meeting the special needs of Africa.

**The SJG programme was organised into three components:** security, access to justice and growth. It was rights based, working to enhance all rights, but especially equality rights (gender), and was supporting those combating corruption. It promoted inter-agency and state civil society co-operations and sector-wide activities.

# INTRODUCTION

## to Training for Judiciary Support Staff

The stakeholder consultations held at the entry of the SJG programme into Jigawa and Enugu States in 2002 identified the lack of regular training for the judiciary as a factor that hindered the effectiveness of the justice system.

Lack of adequate training had meant that both judges and support staff were not up to date with the law or with improved techniques of case management that ensure speedier and more efficient handling of cases, reduction in delays and greater respect for the rights of citizens. The lower level of courts staff in the category of bailiffs, messengers, clerks and registrars had not received training for years, some of them had never received training since they were employed. This meant the standard court procedures which facilitated quick disposal of cases as embodied in legislation had been kept in abeyance, because training opportunities were inadequate, and newly appointed staff received their orientation and direction principally from their superiors and predecessors based on tradition rather than from knowledge of the relevant laws. Many clerks and registrars whose duty it was under the law to guide and assist poor and illiterate litigants as provided by law were unaware of the relevant legal provisions, and did not appreciate the nature and purpose of this role. As a result of the trainings, remarkable improvements were achieved in the performance of the support staff, resulting in increased confidence by the public in the work of the courts, and a reduction in complaints of tardiness and corruption.

In March 2005, SJG commissioned a training needs analysis and sought advice on the methodology and content of the capacity building initiative for the judiciary. SJG consultants from the National Center for State Courts (USA) and Centre for Islamic Legal Studies (Zaria, Nigeria) spent two weeks in Jigawa and Enugu, meeting with representatives of the judiciary and other stakeholders to conduct a training needs analysis and provide a set of recommendations to enhance the capacity of the local courts and their judicial training officers. Their key findings showed lack of a system in place to sustain educational programming for the judiciary. What obtained at the state judiciary level was total reliance on the National Judicial Institute (NJI) to provide training, without commitment at the state level to meet those needs that NJI courses could not provide. This meant that court personnel training needs remained largely unmet.

The key findings showed that there was:

- A basic need for **training on civil process and procedures** for the judicial officers and for court support staff
- A need to **develop and institutionalise the internal capacity to design, deliver and manage a regular courts' education system** at the state level

**AIM:** The aim was to enhance the capacity of judiciary staff in order to improve the overall efficiency of the courts.



# SJG Interventions

## Training

In order to address the needs identified, SJG commenced the implementation of a number of inter-related activities, with the focus being the training of court support personnel. The focus on this level of judiciary staff is informed by the fact that they are the staff who interacted most closely with the public and are in a position to hinder or facilitate poor people's access to the courts, since poor people could not afford to engage lawyers to file and prosecute their cases and therefore have to rely on guidance by the staff of the courts. The training aimed at enhancing the support staff's knowledge and understanding of the civil litigation process, and of the relevant laws and procedures that would facilitate speedier and more just and efficient treatment of cases by the courts.

By the time this intervention was to start SJG had also entered Kano State, where the same training needs were identified. In response SJG in collaboration with Kano and Jigawa state governments organised a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) course in April 2006 at Zaria for 40 members of staff from the high courts and Shari'ah courts. The course included training in techniques for training adults. The roll-out of training commenced in June 2007, supported by SJG, with the training of 750 staff from the two states which was concluded in July 2008 using some of the ToT graduates as facilitators, assisted by resource persons from the NJI and CILS. In Enugu a ToT course was also conducted for 15 staff of the judiciary in November 2007 and the roll-out training commenced with 179 staff of the judiciary in October 2007 led by the ToTs and assisted by resource persons from Jigawa and Enugu judiciaries. Earlier, at the request of the Attorney-General of Enugu State, SJG had supported the training of 150 Justices of the Peace, who are at the lowest level of the judiciary.

## Management of the Training

The Justice Sector Reform Teams (JSRT), which had been established to lead the justice sector reform programme in the three states, took overall responsibility for managing the training programme. Each Justice Sector Reform Team was made up of key decision makers within the justice sector institutions such as the Judiciary, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Planning and Budget, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Nigerian Police, Prison Service and Legal Aid Council, as well as representatives of relevant civil society organisations such as the Nigerian Bar Association, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), and traditional rulers. With support from SJG, the JSRTs have been meeting monthly to chart a course for institutionalising reforms in the justice sector. Both Kano and Jigawa governments undertook to fund continuation of the roll out of the training until all staff are trained.

# Results and Achievements

## Improved Staff Performance in their Respective Workplace

The training has created greater awareness with regard to the responsibilities and duties of the individual judicial officers and support staff and the need for all court personnel to receive continuing judicial education. The post-training survey and responses from the court administration indicates that fewer complaints are being received from court users with regard to the services dispensed by court staff, there are fewer reports of litigants paying “unofficial” fees and less delay in initiating a case and moving a case through the system.

## Addressing the Needs of Poor and Vulnerable People

The focus on court support staff, who are closer to the grassroots level, has helped to prioritise the needs of the poor and vulnerable among court users. The content of the ethics training curriculum emphasises the role of the court staff in treating all court users equally and professionally in line with the Code of Court for Court Employees. Trainees are also taught how to attend to the need of weak and vulnerable court users. This improved service benefits mainly poor litigants who need more assistance in moving through the court system and procedures as they usually cannot afford lawyers and are illiterate.

## Curriculum Developed

Curriculum and teaching materials, developed at the Zaria ToT, were adopted and applied at each roll-out training session. With periodic review and adaptation, these materials could meet the needs of every Nigerian state judiciary.

## Staff and Local Trainers Trained

A significant number of court staff (magistrates, registrars, bailiffs and messengers) have received training, some of them for the first time in their many years of service. At the initial stage the number trained were 300 in Jigawa,

450 in Kano and 179 in Enugu. Since then hundreds of other staff have been trained through the roll out of the training carried out in Kano and Jigawa. The training has covered civil processes and procedures as well as judicial ethics and exposure to international best practices leading to improved knowledge and awareness of trainees on these subjects. In addition a desire for regular continuing judicial education has been created.

## Trained Trainers

Consequent to the intervention, a crop of trained trainers has been produced in each of the states who have facilitated the delivery of the training, and are available for the roll out to other staff. This has helped build local training capacity, reduced the cost of training and enhanced the sustainability of the programme.

## Benefits of Collaboration

The participation of the National Centre for State Courts, NJI and the CILS has enhanced the quality of the training and demonstrated the benefits of collaboration between legal training institutions. In addition, for the first time staff of the high courts and Shari’ah courts were trained together. This provided an invaluable forum for ideas to be shared and created greater appreciation of the complementary roles of staff in the two sides of the judiciary

## The Institutionalisation of Training

The inclusion of a budget line for training in Kano and Jigawa States has been achieved. With such financial support from the State Governments the successes attained can be sustained. Each of the states also committed to establishing a training unit within the judiciary which will have responsibility for continuing education.

# Lessons Learned

## Institutional Capacity to Sustain the Training

An important challenge lies in building the institutional capacity to sustain the training arrangement beyond the project. In Kano and Jigawa States, this has been facilitated by inclusion of a provision for training in the state's annual budget. The Justice Sector Reform Teams of the two states assisted in implementing this sustainability measure. In addition it is necessary to establish an administrative mechanism that plans and supervises the training. Again in both Kano and Jigawa States the Judicial Service Commissions have continued the roll out of the training with the support and encouragement from the state JSRT. The situation in the two states may be contrasted with that of Enugu where there is no such budgetary or administrative arrangement and consequently no additional training has taken place.

## Review Meetings in the Course of the Training

In the course of the training, periodic meetings were held between the trainers, resource persons and managers to assess progress and resolve problems that had cropped up. This approach not only provided opportunity to improve the quality of subsequent sessions of training, but also influenced how the training was implemented in other states.

## Choice of Language for the Training

The choice of language of communication in the delivery of trainings is also a matter that deserves careful consideration. Although English is the official language it might be more beneficial to use a local language when the situation demands. For example, it was observed in the early sessions of the training in Kano that the choice of language of instruction, English, was an impediment to the full understanding of the lectures by some of the participants, this led to the change to Hausa. This strategy was carried over to Jigawa and

Enugu (here the Igbo language was utilised with English). The involvement of the leadership of the judiciary (in all the states) and the Department of Chieftaincy Affairs (in Enugu) has also significantly helped raise the value of the training and consequently the participation of the trainees as well.

## Choice of Location

In designing trainings for staff who live in places far apart, it might be better to consider a residential arrangement or if that might be too costly to decentralise the training location. Otherwise punctuality might not be guaranteed leading to the programmes being abridged or participants having to stay over closing time. Many participants to the training in all the three states came from long distances to the venues of the training or experience great difficulty in getting there. In the future, it would be helpful if trainings are held zonally or participants are accommodated at or close to the venue.

## Use of Adult Training Techniques

The inclusion of training in *adult training techniques* in the course of training of the trainers has assisted in sharpening their teaching skills and contributed to the success of the training programme.

## Interactive Learning

The interactive learning method adopted at the training afforded participants opportunities to learn from each other and express themselves over important issues of reform in the judiciary. For example at every training participants continued to raise the issue of *poor service conditions* as a major cause of unethical conduct in the workplace. These and other ideas presented by participants at the training served as an important source of information and feedback to the Reform Teams, an opportunity which had not been available before.



## Impact

The training of lower level judiciary staff in Enugu, Kano and Jigawa through SJG assistance has helped in prioritising the needs of poor and vulnerable people. This is because the lower level staff deal directly with the grassroots and are the entry point for litigants into the judicial system. Training was provided in civil procedures, professional ethics and how to facilitate the use of the courts by poor and illiterate people. This has resulted in better performance by court staff, improved confidence by litigants, and fewer complaints of neglect and corruption.

The project also appears to be sustainable in view of the degree of ownership exhibited by the beneficiary institutions and the fact that at least in Jigawa and Kano the roll out of the training has been sustained after the expiration of SJG support. The involvement of key judiciary staff in the planning and implementation of the training programme, and the development of trainers and training materials will help embed the intervention in the judiciary. However, the technical competence and expertise required to sustain the results still needs to be periodically improved.

### Number of staff trained (at the initial stage):

- 300 in Jigawa
- 450 in Kano
- 179 in Enugu

Since then hundreds of other staff have been trained through the roll out of the training carried out in Kano and Jigawa.

## OUTCOME:

As a result of this intervention, there is a better performance by court staff, improved confidence by litigants, and fewer complaints of neglect and corruption.



Launched in 2002, the SJG programme aimed to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals:

- By promoting strong partnerships among governments, civil society organisations and the private sector in pursuit of security, justice, the rule of law, development and poverty eradication
- By promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty and hunger
- By promoting a legal and regulatory framework that encouraged non-oil economic growth to give young people a real chance to find decent and productive work rather than become lost in a life of crime

The SJG programme, supported by DFID Nigeria and implemented by the British Council, successfully came to a close in 2010.

