



PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE (PDO)

The Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative otherwise known as Partners West Africa - Nigeria (PWAN) with support from the US Embassy Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) with implementing partners- Partners Global and Democratic Action Group (DAG) launched and implemented the Greater Access to Defense and Justice Project (GADJET) in January 2017; with a scheduled duration of 24-months.

The project established a Public Defenders Office (PDO) in Kano on 16th February 2017 to provide pro bono legal aid services, legal education, advice and representation to less privileged persons in Kano.



The PDO received its first case on the 12th of June 2017, and since then has received 171 cases, 139 of which are criminal and 32 are civil. Of the criminal cases, 15 have been concluded while 10 have been resolved through mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. The PDO also referred 12 cases to other organizations such as the National Human Rights Commission and the Legal Aid Council. The clients are represented by the PDO at the High Courts, Magistrate Courts and Sharia Courts in Kano. They also give legal advice, counsel and or mediate where necessary.

The project team was able to successfully develop IEC materials (fliers, posters and banners) to raise awareness on the activities of the PDO, and how indigent persons in Kano can access its services. The materials were developed in English, Hausa and Pidgin. The PDO has also successfully developed radio jingles in English, Hausa and Pidgin languages to be aired by Freedom Radio, Arewa FM and Wazobia FM respectively. Airing began in the last week of September 2017, and will run till February 2018. The jingles were able to raise awareness on the location and activities of the PDO, and brought about an influx of cases that require both legal representation and legal advice.

As a result of the impact of the office, the PDO has received visits from the immediate past Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice of the state, Kano State Judiciary and other stakeholders.

The PDO has been able to carry out the following activities so far:

Staff Training Programs

PDO Staff members have so far been trained on interviewing less privileged persons, Drafting of legal processes, Enforcement of Fundamental Human Rights among other topics. Training on Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation has also been scheduled.



Awareness Creation Activities and Legal Clinics

The PDO has organized 5 awareness creation activities to acquaint less privileged residents in Kano on the importance of knowing their fundamental human rights and the process of seeking legal assistance from the Public Defender's office (PDO).



Awareness activity and Legal Clinic at the PDO premises (22nd June 2017)



Staff and Stakeholders at the Islamic Center Hall, Unguwa Uku, Tarauni Local Government Area (31st July 2017)



Awareness Activity at the Shahuci Police Station; a police division specifically designated to handle sexual violence cases (13th and 14th September 2017)



Ja En Special Primary School, Sharada Phase 3. The PDO paid a visit to the school, based on a request from its authorities (1st December 2017)



Awareness activity organized in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission, Kano. The visit was based on a fact finding mission to the community which revealed the high rate of sexual assault against young boys. (7th December 2017)

Advocacy Visits to Stakeholders

The PDO paid advocacy visits to the Comptroller of Prisons Kano, Commissioner of Police, Hisbah Board, Children's Remand home, Chief Judge of Kano State, and more recently, the Emir of Kano to intimate them on the objective of the PDO, and how these organizations can access its services as well as refer cases.



Inter- agency Meetings



To increase cooperation and collaboration between Criminal Justice actors in Kano State, the PDO saw it necessary to organize Inter-agency meetings with representatives from the National Human Rights Commission, Police, Prisons, Legal Aid Council, Democratic Action Group. The meetings will be held periodically to include other criminal justice actors.

Notable Cases



The most notable success of the PDO since commencement is that of Baby Khadijah vs. one Mr Muttaka Muhammad. The case was reported to the Public Defender's Office (PDO) Kano in June 2017. The case was filed on behalf of Baby Khadijah by the Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative against Mr. Muttaka Muhammad and his wife, who were alleged to have committed the act of sexually violating the baby. At the time of the unfortunate incident, Baby Khadijah was only six months old.

On the 15th of November, In delivering the judgement the Acting Chief Judge granted all the reliefs and awarded a sum of Ten Million Naira (N10,000,000) as compensation being special damages for the expenses so far made by the baby's family on her health since the occurrence of the unfortunate incident.

The PDO was able to secure the unconditional release of two former detainees:

- One Iliyasu Baduku alias Chindo from Kano central prison, Kurmawa prison after spending two years in detention. His grounds of application was that Chindo was detained for two (2) years, a period far above the constitutional period allowed without arraigning him before a court with jurisdiction.
- Idris Nuhu was referred to the PDO by the prison warders of Kano central prison, Kurmawa. His grounds of application were that he was detained for seven (7) years, a period far above the constitutional period allowed without arraigning him before a court with jurisdiction.



The PDO will continue to contribute to the improvement of access to justice in the state by providing legal education to rural communities, and providing free legal representation for victims and those in need.

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