

Report from the Federal Coordinating Committee on Justice Sector Reform

The Federal Coordinating Committee on Justice Sector Reform as the name implies was established to provide coordination and focus to Federal and State justice sector reform efforts.



Overview of Activities

Enactment of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015

The FJSCR played a crucial role in the enactment of the ACJA 2015. The goal of the ACJA is to achieve an integrated and coherent system of criminal justice that is fast, effective and responsive to the needs of all users including offenders and victims.

Development of a National Policy on Prosecution, Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Prosecutors.

The development of a National Prosecutors Policy, Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Prosecutors was made to complement and strengthen the implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015. The guidelines were enacted to achieve a rational and effective prosecutorial policy.

The development of the National Policy on Prosecution received the support and buy-in of all stakeholders involved in prosecution culminating in its adoption and validation by the Body of Attorneys General - the highest body with prosecutorial responsibility under the 1999 constitution as amended.

Establishment of the Network of Justice Sector Reform Teams.

The Network of Justice Sector Reform Teams (JRTs) is a forum where the Justice Sector Reform Committees in the various states of the Federation and the Federal. Justice Sector Reform Coordinating Committee come together to exchange ideas, experiences and appropriate ways to advance the reform of the justice system in the country. The Network meeting which holds bi-annually took place in Kaduna, Lagos States in 2017 with attendance from all reform teams and observer states.

The Network has thus become a veritable platform for galvanizing nations consensus on issues of national importance and advocating for the adoption and replication. The Network meeting which started with membership from three states now has membership from twenty-six states at the last meeting in Lagos leaving only ten states as observers. It is our hope and expectation the ten observing states will constitute their reform committee without further delay to enable them replicate the various reforms to improve justice delivery in their states.

Organized a National Sensitisation Workshop on the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 for Justice Sector Institutions in the six geo-political zones in the year 2017.

The Federal Ministry of Justice in 2017 observed that not much of the Administrator of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 was known to the various justice institutions that are vested with responsibility by the Act and the general public for whose benefit the Act is made. The Ministry in order to address lack of awareness organized a sensitization workshop for all stakeholders in the criminal justice system and indeed the general public by exposing the far reaching reforms the Act has brought into the administration of criminal justice system. The sensitization programmes took place in Uyo, Enugu, Lagos, Kaduna, Gombe and Kwara States respectively.

Development of a National Policy on Justice in the year 2017.

The FJSCC facilitated the first ever National Summit on Justice. The Summit brought together the heads of different arms of government, Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and other stakeholders at both federal and state levels to critically examine the draft policy, validate and adopt same for national implementation. The Policy sets out agreed principles and guidelines for effective and efficient justice delivery. It provides the framework for resolving cross institutional problems and managing an all-inclusive reform as well as coordinate the implementation of the reforms.

Establishment of Justice Research Centre (JRC) at the Federal Ministry of Justice.

The JRC was established by the Ministry in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (U NODC) under the European Union Funded Support to Justice Sector Reform in Nigeria. The Research Centre is expected to provide legal resource materials for legal officers of the Federal Ministry of Justice.

The development of a National Prosecutors Policy, Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Prosecutors was made to complement and strengthen the implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015.

A National Prosecutors Policy is necessary for efficient crime prosecution in a Federation like Nigeria. It is essential in the context of current challenges of crime management in the Country to harmonise and coordinate the practices and methods of the various prosecutors and prosecuting agencies. This will ultimately improve quality crime prosecution and increased efficiency and effectiveness of criminal justice administration in the Country.

Thus, the policy provides practicable and hands-on statements of principle and guidelines that will assist prosecutors in any part of the Country (whether Federal or State Prosecutors) improve on their service delivery. The policy also contains minimum facilities and support required from the government at the federal and State levels in order to ensure that prosecutors carry out their functions efficiently and effectively.

Challenges:

The reform of the justice sector, like all other reforms in the different sectors of our national life, has been bedeviled with a lot of challenges ranging from:

Lack of resources to implement the identified reforms. Since 2010, various Justice Sector Reform Action Plans have been articulated to address the challenges in the justice sector, unfortunately, Government has not been able to support the implementation of these Action Plans with required resources to achieve the desired results.

Lack of Political will on the part of government to implement the needed reforms. The greater impediment to the reform of the Justice sector is the lack of political will to reform the justice system in the country. This is particularly evident in areas where Constitutional amendments and other forms of legislations are required to achieve the desired reforms. There are

justice sector reform bills that have been pending in the National Assembly for as long as ten (10) years or more and government is not doing much to ensure that the bills are passed into law. These bills include the Police Act (Amendment) Bill; the Prisons Act (Amendment) Bill; and the various anti-corruption Bills.

The lack of priority given to the justice sector. Every year, when government is prioritizing its activities, justice sector is not considered as a priority of government. This may not be unconnected with the wrong view that justice services are intangible goods which cannot be immediately seen or felt by the people. Therefore, priority is given to the tangible services such as construction of roads, houses, hospitals etc. to the detriment of the justice sector.



A CROSS SECTION FMOJ DIRECTORS & PARTICIPANTS AT THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON JUSTICE, 2017

