



**TOWARDS THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF PETTY ACTS IN
NIGERIA BY LAWYERS ALERT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OPEN SOCIETY
INITIATIVE FOR WEST AFRICA.**

REPORT OF PARTNERS MEETING

DATE: October 15th 2019
TIME: 9.30am – 3.00pm
LOCATION: 21B, Democracy Crescent, Gaduwa Estate, Gudu District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.
HOST: Lawyers Alert

• **Overview/Meeting Objectives:**

The meeting had the following objectives;

- 1) Adoption of the Action Plan of the Alliance for the Decriminalization of Petty Offenses in Nigeria and;
- 2) Tracking and documenting petty offenses in Nigeria.

• **Agenda Item #1: Registration**

All participants present at the meeting were duly registered.

• **Agenda Item #2: Introduction and Expectations**

The meeting started proper at 10:20am with an opening prayer (Second Stanza of the National Anthem). The session was facilitated by Jerome Uneje. Participants introduced themselves, the organizations they represent & stated their expectations. Below are some of the participants expectations;

- i. Holistic indicators to capture petty offenses violations
- ii. At the end of the meeting, the Action Plan for the Alliance would be adopted
- iii. How to track petty offenses & know if it can be done
- iv. How tracking & documenting petty offenses is beneficial
- v. A data that can track petty offenses
- vi. To give timely legal aid/services on issues of petty offenses
- vii. To have a document containing petty offenses indicators & an adopted Action Plan
- viii. Have a clear route going forward on how to engage on issues on petty offenses in Nigeria.
- ix. An achievable Action Plan
- x. Reasonable indicators to help collate data for advocacy purposes.



Fig 1: Cross-section of participants

- **Agenda Item #3: Welcome Address/Setting the Agenda**

Mr. Rommy Mom welcomed all participants once again to the meeting. He spoke on the objectives of the meeting and explained to new participants joining us of the previous meetings of petty offenses stakeholders (Nigerian Bar Association, National Human Rights Commission, Legal Aid Council, PRAWA, etc.) which led to the production of the draft Action Plan to be adopted. He stated that the conversation has been on-going & has also given birth to a coalition called the Alliance for the Decriminalization of Petty Offenses in Nigeria (ADPON) to effectively engage towards decriminalization of petty offenses and access to justice for the vulnerable in the society. He stated that the second objective of the meeting which is tracking and documenting petty offenses in Nigeria is a conversation which is new to the stakeholders. He informed participants that between the period of our previous meeting and now, Lawyers Alert was lucky to secure a partnership with Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), who is also represented in the room. He stated that part of what Lawyers Alert is to deliver under its partnership with OSIWA is to provide data for petty offenses in Nigeria which has been a big gap in petty offenses interventions in Nigeria as it affects advocacy, planning, etc. He concluded by saying that Lawyers Alert hopes that within this project and within the Action Plan of the Alliance, we would be able to track, harvest and document data on petty offenses. He thanked everyone once again for making out time to be here and appreciated OSIWA for believing & partnering with Lawyers Alert.



Fig 2: Bar. Rommy Mom, President, Lawyers Alert

A remark by OSIWA was given by Mikang Longjam. She stated that petty offenses is a big issue for them in OSIWA not just in Nigeria but also in West Africa. OSIWA saw the importance to start a conversation around it, hence this intervention. Of course, we know that our criminal system is lacking in so many areas and when we think about the poor & vulnerable, we know that they are the ones most affected by petty offenses. She stated that for them in OSIWA, the project is timely and they are waiting to see the gains of the project which is very important to them. She concluded by informing the house of OSIWA's three project area; Economic governance, Political governance, Human Rights, justice and equality. This project on decriminalizing petty offenses sits on their human rights, justice and equality work she said. She thanked all for coming and wished us all a fruitful deliberation.



Fig 3: Mikang Longjam, OSIWA

- **Agenda Item #4: Adoption of Action Plan**

This session was taken by Ellen Onugha. She gave a brief rundown of how the Action Plan came to be. She stated that the Action Plan is a collective work of all stakeholders of the Alliance following series of meetings. The Alliance saw the need for an Action Plan which is to give direction and synergy. She spoke on New Correctional Service Act 2019 which was passed after the final Action plan was developed and the need to incorporate it. She explained to the new participants that the Action Plan was developed using four tools i.e. Research, Litigation, Advocacy & Media/Awareness creation. She talked through the Action Plan (Activities, Objectives, Outputs, Indicators, MOVs) with the participants so inputs could be made.



Fig 4: Ellen Onugha: Adoption of the Action Plan

Under Research on the Action Plan, the following observations were made;

- i. Participants stated that areas that reflect institutions, should be explicit i.e. list of organizations and structures.
- ii. Participants stated that petty offenses is not just centered on children but all age brackets.
- iii. It was also suggested that a mobile application should be considered for documentation of petty offenses even as the online tool “LADOCKT” is been expanded to accommodate petty offenses.
- iv. Engage NOI Polls for data collation.

Under Litigation, the following observations were made;

- i. Participants suggested that the Action Plan should also capture training and involvement of paralegals
- ii. Trainings should not just be for judges but should include the Nigeria Police Force, Registrars/Clerks of lower courts, AEPB.
- iii. It was suggested that the Alliance should work closely with Justice Research Institute and Citizens Gavel.

Under Advocacy, the following observations were made;

- i. Participants suggested that in collaborating with the Judiciary, the National Committee for Non-Custodial measures, Comptroller General, Registrars/Clerks of Lower courts, National Judicial Institute should also be engaged.
- ii. It was agreed that for speedy access to justice, Practice direction from the Chief Judge should also be included.
- iii. Institutions should also be spelt out under linking of the Judiciary for alliance building & partnership i.e. AEPB, Correctional Service, NPF, Comptroller General, National Judicial Institute, etc.

Under Media/Awareness Creation, the following observations were made;

- i. Participants suggested that we should focus more on online media platforms
- ii. The Alliance should liaise with OAK TV, Premium times, Human Rights Radio (Leverage on OSIWA's partnership with Human Rights Radio).
- iii. It was also agreed that we post contents on our organization's social media handles
- iv. It was suggested that there should a hub for collation of the Alliance's media content so as to avoid discrepancies by different media outlets.

After the general inputs and corrections, participants the Action Plan to be circulated by close of business tomorrow. Ellen on behalf of ADPON appreciated all for their active participation and contributions.



Fig 5: Cross-section of participants

- **Agenda Item #5: Tea Break**

All participants proceeded to have tea for 30 minutes.

- **Agenda Item #6: How do we track petty offenses in Nigeria**

This session was taken by Roseline Oghenebrume. She said the essence of this session is to have indicators that speaks to petty offences so as to monitor, harvest and document petty offenses violations towards evidence-based advocacy and tailored interventions around petty offenses in Nigeria. She gave a detailed explanation of how Lawyers Alert's online tool "LADOCKT" came to existence. It was developed by different stakeholders working on Gender Based Violence, HIV&AIDS, Persons Who Use Drugs, Sexual Minorities, Sex Workers, Persons With Disabilities, etc. She stated the tool as of now captures only Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) violations. She showed the participants what the online tool looks like and how it has been used over the years to document SRHR violations. She explained the content of the tool in details and also showed participants a published SRHR violations report from information inputted into the tool.



Fig 6: Roseline Oghenebrume: How do we track petty offenses in Nigeria.

She led participants to list various petty offenses they know. The below were identified petty offenses;

- i. Wandering
- ii. Loitering
- iii. Disobedience to parents
- iv. Begging
- v. Hawking
- vi. Public display of intimacy
- vii. Breach of promise
- viii. Commercial sex work
- ix. Wrong parking
- x. Indiscriminate disposal of waste
- xi. Traffic violation

Participants were then split into two groups to identify different violations that occurs under the above outlined petty offenses and include other petty offenses they may remember during the course of brainstorming. Group 1 was to work on item i – v while group 2 were to work on item vi – xi. Participants were given 30 minutes to develop the following indicators and report back for presentations.

GROUP 1 PRESENTATION.

Wandering/ Loitering – this was merged into one item as participants in the group stated that it had same meaning.

Indicators/Violations - Unlawful arrest, battery, assault, rape/sexual assault, verbal abuse, false imprisonment, exploitation, seizure of personal belongings, denial of legal representation.

Disobedience to Parents

Indicators/Violations – Battery, molestation, torture, assault, verbal abuse, corporal punishment, starvation/food deprivation, stigmatization, incarceration, seizure of personal belongings, emotional abuse, denial of legal representation.

Begging

Indicators/Violations – Battery, verbal abuse, assault, rape/sexual assault, false imprisonment, harassment, exploitation, seizure of personal belongings, emotional abuse, denial of legal representation.

Hawking

Indicators/Violations – Unlawful arrest, battery, verbal abuse, assault, rape/sexual assault, false imprisonment, seizure of goods, exploitation, denial of legal representation.

Violation of Traffic rules

Indicators/Violations – Extortion, verbal abuse, damage of vehicle, seizure of plate number, denial of legal representation.



Fig 7: Cross-section- Group 1.

GROUP 2 PRESENTATION.

Public Display of Affection

Indicators/Violations – Arrest/detention, mob attack, assault, exploitation, extortion, stigmatization, harassment, denial of legal representation.

Breach of Promise

Indicators/Violations – Arrest, Detention, Blackmail, denial of legal representation.

Commercial Sex Work

Indicators/Violations – Rape, harassment, arrest, assault, extortion, stigmatization, detention, emotional abuse, blackmail, forced eviction, denial of legal representation.

Wrong Parking

Indicators/Violations – Confiscation, assault, extortion, arrest, exorbitant fine, denial of legal representation.

Indiscriminate disposal of waste

Indicators/Violations – Arrest/detention, denial of legal representation, exorbitant fine, sealing of promises.

Traffic violation

Indicators/Violations – Arrest/detention, exorbitant fine, extortion, denial of legal representation, harassment, assault.



Fig 8: Cross-section- Group 2.

Roseline appreciated all participants for their contributions in the group work and informed them that there will be a training on how to use the tool to document petty offenses when it has been expanded to accommodate petty offenses.

- **Agenda Item #7: Next Steps**

The below are the next steps as agreed by participants;

1. Ellen to share the Adopted Action Plan with participants by close of business tomorrow.
2. With regards to registration of the Alliance, participants agreed that we should create more awareness and get more organizations working on petty offense to come on board. We should get working first, carry out research and interventions on petty offenses, let's be known. We should do a test run of our Action Plan; registration can come much later.
3. Synergy amongst organizations should be maintained in order for us to work better.
4. A WhatsApp group to be created by the secretariat for the Alliance on or before the 18th of October for better communication. Content should only be centered on issues of petty offenses. All absent participants should be added
5. Harvesting of petty offenses cases
6. Build partnership/engagement with relevant state actors/stakeholders
7. Send out the collated petty offenses and violations gathered by participants.
8. Send out a compiled list of all legal provisions for the movement e.g. Correctional Act.

9. Build partnerships with Organizations providing free legal services & paralegal services.

- **Agenda Item #8: Vote of Thanks/Close**

Roseline on behalf Lawyers Alert and ADPON thanked all participants for their time and active participation. She shared Lawyers Alert's toll-free line (08099937318) which can be circulated to partners for reporting of violations. she once again thanked all for their commitment to the Alliance and their service towards humanity. The meeting ended at 3.00pm.



Fig 9: Group photograph