

Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC) - Federal

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1. Editor's Note



Maxwell Ekor (PhD)

I am delighted to present to our esteemed readers, this March 2022 edition of the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC) Monthly Newsletter. As usual, it contains informative and educative information on key developments in the criminal justice system as well as ACJMC's activities.

To enable stakeholders and the public understand the ACJMC's mechanism for influencing positive changes in the criminal justice system, the article section explains the committee's change management framework that clarifies how the ACJMC identifies the bottlenecks in the criminal justice system, the type of interventions to address the problems, the beneficiaries of the interventions and then the short, medium and long-term effects of the interventions.

The article section of the first three editions of the newsletter discussed the role of the ACJMC in improving the criminal justice system. Subsequent publications will provide expert opinions on specific and topical matters that will be informative and educative.

2. Message from the Executive Secretary's Desk



Barrister Sulayman Dawodu

Dear distinguished partners and stakeholders, thank you for the positive response to our Newsletter thus far. In the last edition, I ended by indicating that the challenges facing the ACJMC will be the core of my message in the present publication. Permit me then to highlight some of the main problems.

First is the issue of funding. Although the ACJMC has been captured in the federal budget under the Office of the Attorney-General, the allocations are still inadequate to cater for its capital, recurrent and overhead expenditure. To achieve the objectives of ACJMC, adequate funding is fundamental, without which the committee faces a herculean task.

Second, is the challenge associated with the committee's autonomy and independence. At this time, the ACJMC operates a framework which makes it absolutely dependent on its supervising ministry and thus it doesn't have the flexibility or autonomy to supervise the ministry and all the other stakeholders. Without full autonomy, the committee is greatly limited and restricted in its activities. To make steady progress towards achieving the objectives set out in the ACJA, the committee needs to have full expression, and this comes in the form of autonomy. Until full autonomy is achieved, the committee would be greatly limited and restricted.

Finally, while the committee has received tremendous support from donor and development partners in terms of funding, I am confident that scaling up such supports will further enhance the ACJMC capacity.

3. Key Developments in the Criminal Justice



The Department of States Services (DSS) in the month under review continued its prosecution of Nnamdi Kanu, the head of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Specifically, the Federal High Court, Abuja, on March 16, 2022, dismissed a motion filed by Kanu, for the Director-General of the DSS to give oral evidence on his state of health. Of relevance to the ACJMC however is the fact that this high-profile case is being conducted with hopes that it will end in a reasonable time as provided in ACJA 2015.



The major development concerning the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in March 2022 was the declaration by the headship of the NSCDC that the paramilitary outfit now has powers to prosecute suspected culprits after investigating the alleged crimes for which they are arrested. In addition, the corps also now has the power to, among others things, set up an armed Squad to enhance its operations. The ACJMC is optimistic that with an enhanced legal instrument, the NSCDC will be more effective in its operations, especially in the dispensation of criminal matters through the courts.



In order to avoid the surge in crime among Nigerian students, and in line with the crime preventive measures, the NHRC expressed its concern over the incessant strikes by the Academic

Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Thorough its , saying such actions have become the gravest threat to the Nigerian university system, in particular, and the Nigerian education sector in general. The ACJMC aligns with the NHRC as such preventive measures are instrumental in reducing crime and other unlawful activities among the youths. The move also conforms with Part 4 of the ACJA 2015 that provides for the prevention of offences and injury to public property.



In line with the speedy trial provisions of ACJA, the NDLEA on March 7th 2022 arraigned the suspended Deputy Commissioner of Police Abba Kyari and six others before Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court, Abuja, on an eight count criminal charge bordering on conspiracy and drug trafficking. The ACJMC expects that the case will be completed in reasonable time.



The ICPC in the month under review got judgments against some civil servants as it continues its effort at reducing corruption among government employees.

On March 22, 2022, the ICPC obtained an Appeal Court judgment in Sokoto division which upheld the 14 years jail term handed to a deputy director of Federal Character Commission, Alh. Ahmed Balarabe by a Zamfara State High Court, for defrauding some job seekers of N8 million.

The Commission had on March 15, 2022, through an Anambra State High Court, obtained judgment against a former Treasurer with the Anambra State Ministry of Finance, Innocent Ezeonwuka, to 11 years imprisonment for defrauding pensioners of N66.5 million. The ACJMC believes these are clear signs that the ICPC is contributing to improvement in the criminal justice system.

6. ACJMC's Change Management Approach to improving the Criminal Justice System



Maxwell Ekor (PhD)

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the ACJA by government agencies, the ACJMC has a Change Management Framework (CMF) that guide its strategic and operational activities with the agencies.

The CMF is explained in the flow chart below, and commences with the ACJMC acknowledging that the system is impaired by structural and institutional challenges. These limitations manifest in specific issues such as slow completion of criminal cases, congestion of cases in courts leading to congestion in prisons and detaining persons awaiting trials in courts. Furthermore, there is the lack of synergy among the agencies charged with dealing with criminal matters. The system is also weakened by the absence of harmonisation in recording, storing, and sharing of data and information on criminal cases.

Given the specific challenges facing the criminal justice system, the ACJMC has been intervening through the following measures:

- a) Monitoring of criminal cases in courts to ensure compliance with ACJA. The beneficiaries are persons charged with criminal matters. The short, medium, and long-term benefits are improvement in the turn-around time in the handling of criminal matters, the quick dispensation of cases and prison decongestion, and substantial compliance with the ACJA 2015.
- b) Initiating regular meetings with stakeholders in line with s.470(2)(h) of ACJA. The beneficiaries are the agencies of government charged with the duty for administration of criminal justice. Here, the short, medium and long-term benefit is the engendering of a participatory approach that will ensure cordiality

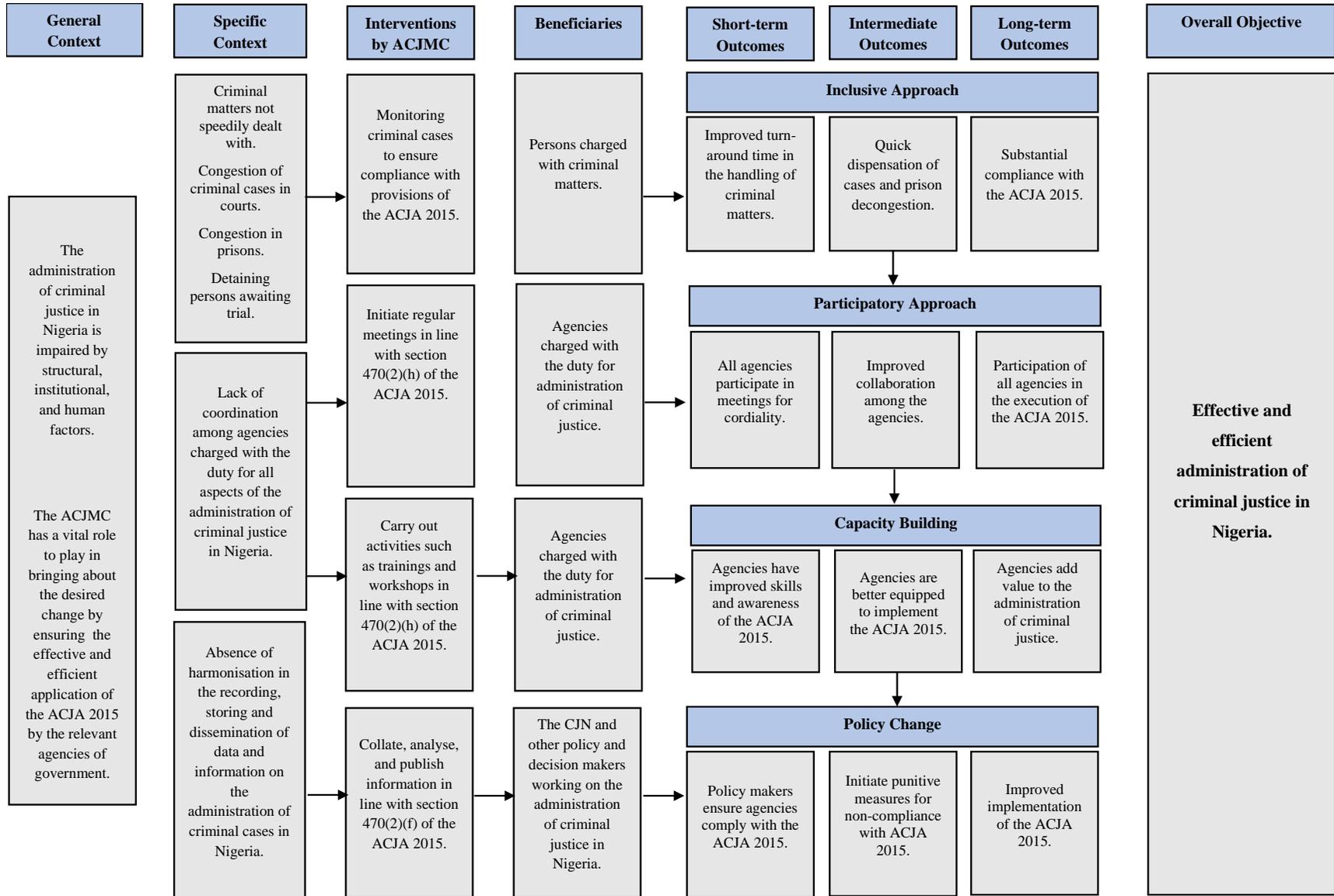
among the agencies and by extension lead to improvement in the execution of the ACJA.

- c) Carrying out activities such as trainings and workshops in line with s.470(2)(h) of ACJA. The beneficiaries of this interventions are the agencies charged with the duty for administration of criminal justice. In the short, medium and long-term, the capacity development initiatives will ensure that the agencies develop the necessary skills and awareness about the ACJA and are better equipped to contribute to the effective and efficient administration of criminal justice.
- d) Collating, analyzing and publishing information in line with s.470(2)(f) of the ACJA. The beneficiaries here include the Chief Justice and other decision makers working on the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria. In the short, medium and long-term, the goal is to achieve the desired policy changes through the availability of needed information at the disposal of the decision makers.

One of the key steps that the ACJMC has taken with respect to this intervention is to base any collation, analysis and publication on quality research. The empirical evidence consequently provides the foundation upon which the Committee conducts its advocacies and interventions for an improved criminal justice system. Another reason why the ACJMC is giving priority to carrying out quality research is because the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as its attendant consequences, has made it imperative for more evidence-based advocacy and decision-making.

Overall, the ACJMC is committed, through its change management framework, to ensure that agencies of government charged with the responsibility of administering criminal justice adhere to the provisions of ACJA 2015, and by extension contribute to the effective and efficient administration of criminal justice in Nigeria.

ACJMC’s Change Management Framework



Source: ACJMC Secretariat

5 ACJMC Activities for March 2022



The ACJMC activities in the month of March 2022 that enabled it achieve certain targets are as follows:

- 1) Support of ACJMC States at Sokoto and Kebbi State 2nd- 8th of March. Training of Criminal Stakeholders in states that have adopted ACJL.
- 2) 14TH – 16th March : IFF Training at the UN House
- 3) Statement Taking Room Monitoring Team meeting Supported by ROLAC at the Conference Hall Gudu Abuja. Usage of the STR , Challenges and the way forward for the STR were discussed.
- 4) ACJMC state Support Jigawa State, Inauguration and workshop at Jigawa. 16th- 18th of March.
- 5) Oversight Visitation at the Police Division at the National Assembly on the 17th of March 2022. The Supervising Magistrate was Munirat Ibrahim Tanko.

ACJMC Police Duty Solicitors Scheme (PDSS)

On 1st March, 2022 a physical team meeting was held with all Duty Solicitors. It was chaired by the ACJMC Executive Secretary Mr. Sulayman Dawodu and anchored by the Supervising Solicitor Mrs. Genevieve Ike Johnson Esq.

The meeting was focused on getting feedbacks from all the Duty Solicitors. The Executive Secretary engaged in a one-on-one discussion with each Duty Solicitor on their work so far as regards achievements, challenges and possible plan of action in order to tackle those challenges.

The Senior Supervising Solicitor commended the Duty Solicitors on their efforts so far in the first month of work and made further clarifications on all reporting formats. The Executive Secretary also shared the vision to expand the scope of the PDSS to include providing legal representation for suspects when charged to Court.

There has been more requests for pro bono lawyers for suspects who were charged to Court and the senior supervisor so far was able to secure a few pro bono lawyers for some of them on an adhoc basis until a formal kick off of the Court Duty Solicitor Scheme.

The Supervising Solicitor made rounds to the stations while supplying tables and chairs to Duty Solicitors in stations that need them.

In the month under review, there were major progresses as regards the relationship between Duty Solicitors and the Police Officers. Most of the Stations granted access to interview suspects and to see the cell facilities irrespective of the intermittent hiccups reported at other times.

Photo Gallery



Support of ACJMC State Jigawa



Support of ACJMC State Jigawa
(Inauguration)



Support of ACJMC State Kebbi



Supply of Sleeping Materials to Police Divisions



Statement Taking Room Monitoring Team
Meeting

Quote of the Month

The cry of the poor is not always just, but if you don't listen to it, you will never know what justice is.

Howard Zinn.

About the ACJMC Newsletter

- This newsletter is a publication of the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC) Secretariat.
- The goal is to inform and educate the criminal justice stakeholders and the public about the ACJMC's activities.
- The views expressed in the guest article section are entirely those of the author.
- For more information, please contact the Executive Secretary via sulaydawodu@yahoo.com or 09094688542.